a comparison of

FIVE INNER-CITY PARKS

implications for planning

City of Toronto
Department of
Parks and Recreation

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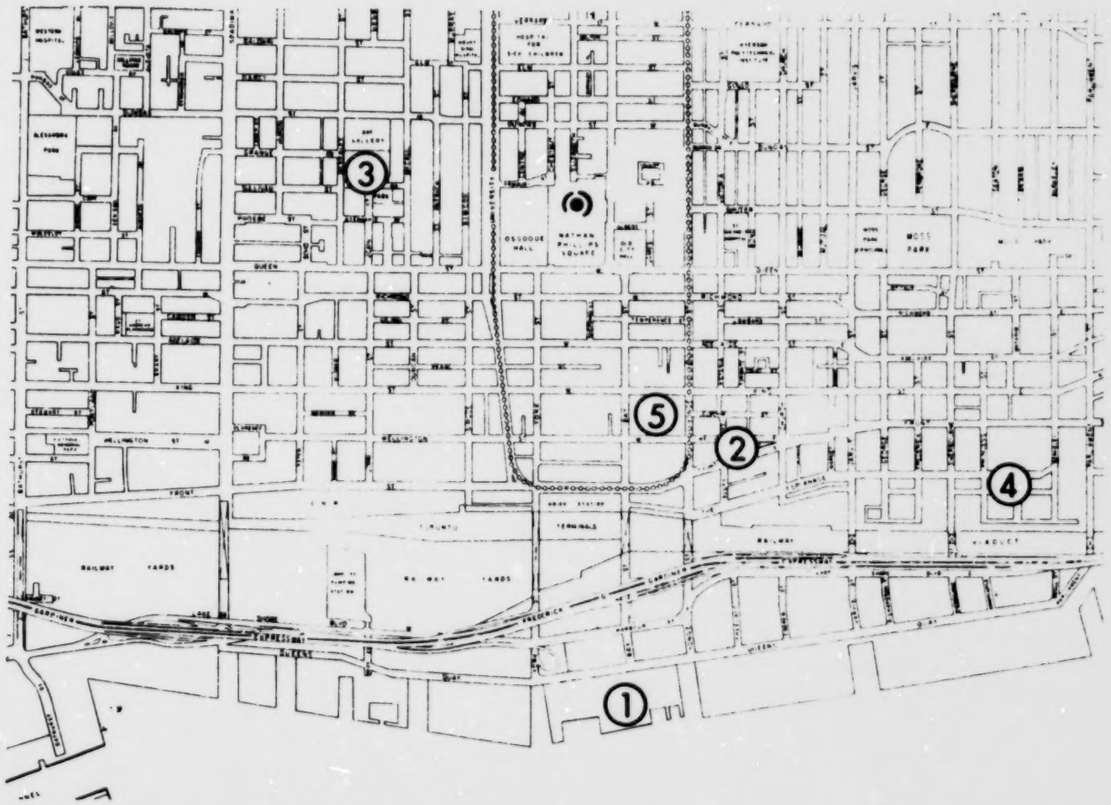

① HARBOUR SQUARE PARK
② BERCZY PARK
③ GRANGE PARK
④ CROMBIE PARK
⑤ COMMERCE COURT

FIVE INNER-CITY PARKS

LOCATIONS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

This report will evaluate the effects of a variety of social and physical factors on the life of public parks and plazas in downtown Toronto. Its objective is to identify the factors which contribute to the health of public space.

Five parks - Grange, Crombie, Harbour Square, Commerce Court and Berczy - were chosen for evaluation. The sites studied represent a diverse cross-section of open space opportunities in Toronto's core. Grange and Crombie Parks serve their immediate residential neighbourhoods. Harbour Square, part of the regional park system along Lake Ontario, attracts users from both the immediate area as well as the entire metropolitan area. Commerce Court functions as a downtown plaza with peak use occurring on weekdays at noon hour. Berczy is a popular park in a busy downtown location, and is notable for its striking design.

This report is a pilot study to develop an evaluative programme which in the future could be applied to any open space opportunity. The five park profiles in the Appendix form the basis of this evaluative programme.

Park life study is a new area of inquiry. Methods of data collection, evaluation, and assessment have few precedents for researchers. An evaluation index, questionnaires, and ecological mapping were evaluative tools developed specifically for this report. These were structured to gather site user and design data, and to evaluate this data using theories devised by environmental and behavioural research practitioners. The evaluation programme was developed to accomplish three objectives:

1. devise methods of data collection;
2. analyze patterns of use, assess user perceptions of the parks and evaluate site characteristics; and
3. identify factors contributing to park success.

The six-month-study began in July, 1985. Much of July and early August were devoted to creating the evaluative tools described in the Design and Methods section of this report, and theoretical literature concerning park use and data gathering methods was reviewed.

From mid-August to early September extensive weekday use data was gathered in all five parks. All observations, ecological mapping, interviews and evaluation indices were completed at that time.

Despite a limited amount of field work, a short observation period, occasionally inclement weather and the small questionnaire sample size, the observations made have captured the essential character and rhythm of life encountered in the five studied parks.

The report's main body is composed of 13 factors. Park profiles are separate from the main text. They synopsize the design and use characteristics of the parks studied. Examples of the data collection methods can be found in the Design and Methods Section.

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The field of environmental-behavioural research is regarded with some hesitancy from more established disciplines, such as architecture and engineering. It is a new science, one which lacks a formalized approach or research to compare findings. Nonetheless, this research is appropriate in planning open space for people.

A small but growing body of research is attempting to define the functioning of various behavioural settings, such as parks. Several such researchers have provided insight for this report. Seymour Gold, Jane Jacobs, Albert Rutledge, William Whyte and others have taken the first steps towards developing a comprehensive parks planning process that incorporates environmental-behavioural research. More importantly, all these observers have looked at parks and plazas as an important land use that deserves careful attention. Their insights on the development of parks planning theory are included in this report.

Herbert Gans first identified the gap between designers and those who use what is designed as "potential" and "effective" environments. The potential environment is the intended use envisioned by the designer. The effective environment is how the potential environment is actually used. Sometimes the two do not mesh, and conflict between the needs of the user and the site design results. This report attempts to bridge this gap.

Parks have their own potential for success or failure, according to Jane Jacobs. She dispels the notion that public open space is an intrinsic good, easily created on any piece of unused land. Success lies in effective design, deliberate attraction of users, and integration with the surrounding urban environment. Her premise is that there are design, programming and locational factors which contribute to success. This report is intended to identify these factors.

Albert Rutledge suggested a new approach to park design and management. He believes parks planning must move away from a linear design process with a fixed beginning and end. Because the evolution of a park or plaza does not end with the completion of the construction contract, Rutledge suggests a circular park design model which encourages learning from experience and responsiveness to user needs. Post-occupancy evaluation is a vital component in this design process. Evaluation is a way of discovering what makes parks work. This report developed and used such a post-occupancy evaluation format. ►

Christopher Alexander identified and documented 283 architectural design patterns which create comfortable and effective environments. The patterns provide a method of examining elements which contribute to creating complex environmental settings, such as cities, homes and parks. This approach supplied the format for documenting the thirteen factors discussed in this report.

William Whyte offered research methods and a wealth of information on how people use outdoor space. Whyte identified specific factors which help create successful outdoor plazas. He also provided a format for studying plaza life, an approach that has influenced the shaping of this report.

This report applied environmental-behavioural research theories to open space planning. These theories established a research framework and insights into understanding how a park functions, and how it is perceived by those who use it.

Superficially, it may appear that a site is functioning well. However, if users perceive it as confusing, uncomfortable, unsafe or boring, then the site will not be successful. The authors listed here have stressed the importance of user satisfaction in determining the success or failure of a public open space. All too often, the fulfillment of logistical and aesthetic concerns of the designer overshadow the fundamental question that park planners need to address: Will this park satisfy the needs of the users?

2.0 FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF PARKS

Various factors may influence the success or failure of a park or plaza. The factors presented are generalized principles and represent points around which observations are drawn. They were derived from the theoretical background literature. These factors can be used as a checklist when conducting a thorough site analysis or evaluation of a design proposal. Parks planners run the risk of failure when these factors are not considered.

It is not an exhaustive list and the chosen factors warrant further exploration. They were the most relevant, given the nature of the selected sites and the parameters of this report.

The thirteen factors have been divided into three categories as follows:

Contextual Support
- Surrounding Land-use
- Travel Time
- Microclimate/Environment
- Enclosure

Design Framework
- Focus
- Centring
- Legibility
- Intricacy
- Street Views
- Sitability

Social Milieu
- 100% Location
- Animation, Attractions and Amenities
- Territories and Turfs

The three categories represent inquiry progression from external to internal factors.

In reality, all of these factors are interrelated. For ease of presentation, the factors are presented as separate elements. Undoubtedly, there are relationships between factors, and the unity of all thirteen in creating a park or plaza can be seen.

The name of each factor is first presented in bold letters, accompanied by its symbol (pictograph). A concise definition follows with discussion of the attributes and impact of the factor on park life. An illustration of the factor using examples from the studied parks and plazas, and an examination of the implications of each factor for parks planning, are also included.

CONTEXTUAL SUPPORT

Contextual Support - These are pre-design environmental factors which should be considered before site development. The effects of surrounding land uses, the user catchment area of a site, microclimatic conditions, and the elements which define space are important such factors. The degree to which these factors are supportive of park life largely determines the eventual success or failure of a site.

2.1 CONTEXTUAL SUPPORT

2.1.1 SURROUNDING LAND USE

The immediate land uses surrounding a park or plaza. The surrounding land use has a significant impact on who the park users will be, where they will come from, when they will use the park, and how often. To determine the likely success or failure of a particular open space, the relationship that exists between the site and its surrounding land uses must be understood.

The nature of surrounding properties and the characteristics of local residents and visitors have a major impact on who uses a park. Grange Park, for example, is located near Chinatown. Not surprisingly, it attracts a large number of Asian users, and tourists attracted by the area's Chinese restaurants and shops.

Harbour Square's proximity to the attractions of the Waterfront makes it popular with both tourists and visitors from other parts of the City. In Berczy and Commerce Court, workers from nearby office towers are the most likely users. Crombie Park, on the other hand, is a traditional neighbourhood park, in the sense that its users are predominantly residents from the surrounding St. Lawrence Neighbourhood.

Parks located in areas with large concentrations of "skid-row-dependent-activities," i.e. hostels, pawnshops and second hand clothing stores, attract large number of "marginals."

Moss Park and Allan Gardens, and to a lesser extent Berczy and Grange parks, have a fairly high proportion of users who fall under this category. Commerce Court, Crombie and Harbour Square, in comparison, have virtually none. This is largely a reflection of the lack of "skid-row-dependent-activities" in the vicinity of these parks. There is a strong correlation between complaints concerning mainals' activities in parks and the extent of "skid-row-dependent-activities" nearby.

Park activity periods also reflect surrounding land use characteristics. Commerce Court and Berczy are primarily used on weekdays at lunch time, but the theatre district near Berczy gives it a busier life during evenings and on weekends. In Grange use is fairly constant throughout the days, evenings and weekends, reflecting the mix of residential, commercial and institutional uses in its immediate neighbourhood.

Proximity to high-activity areas can also influence park use. Activity nodes such as subway station surface entrances, transportation terminals such as railway or bus stations, department stores, large office complexes and major street intersections can influence park life. A major node, such as the Ferry Terminal adjacent to Harbour Square, is supportive of life in that park because it provides a constant source of users from the ferry docks. Harbour Square field observation showed that the ebb and flow of site users directly corresponded with ferry arrivals and departures.

Commerce Court, on the other hand, benefits less from its close proximity to several thousand office workers, easy access to the subway and many shops and services, since the majority of potential users are located indoors and underground. In this case, the underground mall is unsupportive of park use since the more attractive indoor activities draw many potential plaza users, especially during winter. Plaza life could be enhanced if shops were around the plaza at grade.

Surrounding land use influences on park life have significant implications for parks planning. Careful surrounding land use analysis is essential in determining a new site's potential as a successful open space. If the site is surrounded by vacant and derelict land or unsupportive land uses, then it may never be effective as a park site. When planning new sites, the land use perimeter of a park is a major factor to consider in determining the eventual user population and use patterns.

"Marginals" is a catch phrase used to describe those individuals who, for a variety of reasons, either choose to, or are forced to live outside the mainstream of society. Every city has its "marginals," the derelicts, bag ladies, hobos and the homeless — the economically disadvantaged and the socially isolated. For some this is a permanent state, the end result of lost struggles with alcoholism, drug addiction or mental illness. Others are only passing through, literally and figuratively. Either they are in the area for a short period or time, or their present situation is a phase, one that will change when personal, economic or medical difficulties are overcome.

2.1.2 TRAVEL TIME

The time people are willing to travel to reach a park or plaza.

If a park or plaza is more than three minutes away from potential users, it will not receive significant use. People who live and work close to a park are the most likely users. A two-to-three-block radius is the approximate threshold level beyond which the desire to use a park is thwarted by distance.

Our research supports this finding. Users were asked how long it took them to reach the park they were in. The average travel time was calculated at 2.7 minutes with 85% of the respondents having walked to the site. When users were asked why they came to the park, 30% answered "because it was close."

However, the decision to visit a particular park is complicated by many factors. With choice, people will choose to visit a park that supports or enhances their intended activities. For example, workers at Commerce Court will travel to hear the outdoor noon-hour concerts at the Toronto-Dominion Centre or relax at Berczy, by-passing their own plaza on the way. Therefore, not all parks serve identical functions or are suitable for all activities. Proximity is not the sole factor governing user selection of a park. Some parks draw users from a wide catchment area. For example, a significant number of Harbour Square users come from a great distance.

The travel-time factor is a vital component in understanding use patterns. A successful local park or plaza fulfills the needs of its catchment area's population.

2.1.3 MICROCLIMATE/ENVIRONMENT

A microclimate is the climate of a small geographic area considered with reference to the general climate of a region. Microclimates can either be a natural phenomenon or the result of human intervention.

Other local environmental factors which could affect park or plaza use include noise, air quality, and other forms of pollution.

Commerce Court has significant microclimatic problems. User complaints were related to high wind velocities and lack of sunlight. Together, these two factors give Commerce Court a noticeably windier and colder climate than Berczy which is only a hundred metres away. The 56-storey west tower of Commerce Court creates high wind currents which are channelled through gaps onto the plaza below. The property managers have attempted to buffer the wind effect by placing evergreens during winter months in the north plaza facing King Street. Unfortunately, the trees are far from the full wind force, so benefits are negligible. Furthermore, available sunlight is blocked by buildings on the plaza's south side. This is especially significant in spring and fall when the warmth of the sun is vital to user comfort.

Noise levels are another significant environmental factor. The comparison between site and street readings show that parks like Grange are islands of quiet in the City. Questionaire respondents gave the highest satisfaction ratings to parks with the lowest noise levels.

Microclimatic conditions can affect park use adversely. Planners and developers should work to reduce negative microclimatic conditions by avoiding north-facing sites and large open expanses. In addition, the negative impact of high wind velocities and lack of sunlight should be remedied whenever possible. During site development, opportunities to create sun pockets and utilize walls, fences and vegetation to protect users against prevailing winds should be taken advantage of, to extend spring and fall use.

2.1.4 ENCLOSURE

The periphery which defines the boundary of a park or plaza. The transformation of open space into a "place" is largely determined by the presence of structural elements, landscaping, or buildings. These elements appear as walls, thereby creating an "outdoor room."

Enclosure performs three primary functions. First, it directs user activity. Second, it gives space a theatrical quality by creating a backdrop which focuses attention on the people and activities within the space. Third, enclosure makes space a positive feature rather than an undefined leftover between buildings.

Both Commerce Court and Berczy exemplify enclosed space. Their most notable characteristic is their distinct room-like shape. Surrounding buildings and streets create definite site boundaries. Both sites are identifiable entities within the City, and much of their sense of 'place' is derived from their enclosed nature.

People naturally tend to cluster on an outdoor space's periphery. An edge conducive to users of any outdoor space is composed of activity pockets. Benches, displays, newsstands and cafes make an interesting periphery that invites people to pause. Building edges with window displays, cafes, weather protection, interesting detailing, and lots of windows and doors also encourage lingering.

Building edges are either supportive or non-supportive. The "old" bank building at Commerce Court is a supportive edge. Its exterior contributes to user comfort in many ways. The ledges along the building's south side function like a lunchroom counter and provide protected niches for sitting.

When a building edge is unsupportive, life in an outdoor space is diminished. The Commerce Court west tower makes no friendly overtures to pedestrians. Its glass facade rises straight up from the sidewalk. It possesses no human scale, small comforts or fine detail like the old bank. In short, it repels life.

To give a park or plaza presence, retain and direct its activity, buildings, streets, fences, or vegetation should define boundaries. The edges should have many activity pockets. For new sites, negotiations with developers should address the park's relationship to the surrounding building edge.

DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Design Framework - Once the contextual conditions are assessed as supportive, the site design framework can be developed. The designer should consider the needs of potential users, create site identity, impose a layout which encourages people to meet and move easily through the site, develop site diversity, and provide many seating opportunities.

2.2 DESIGN FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 FOCUS

A site feature which, through its prominence or associations, imparts identity, creates a sense of place, and facilitates orientation.

Architectural, artistic, or topographic features can function as focal elements. A dominant building creates a theatrical backdrop, or a landmark can guide potential users to the site. As cities and their architecture become increasingly undifferentiated, the role of outdoor art as visual focal points, imparting identity to a place, is becoming more important. Topographic foci include natural landscape features, ranging from large bodies of water to trees.

The Grange, a large Georgian house in Grange Park, creates a dramatic backdrop and stage area for teenagers and Tai Chi participants. Other users were distributed around this central area much like an audience (see User Distribution Map 10). Situated at the head of John Street, The Grange beckons people into the park.

Strongly focused sites are more likely remembered, and used, than those with a less identifiable character. For example, most people when questioned could identify Berczy Park, not by its name, but by its mural. One Berczy user noted that she saw Derek Besant's mural on a television news program every night and wanted to see it. Though she did not know the name of the park, nevertheless she found the park by way of the mural. She has since become a frequent visitor to Berczy.

In general, a focal point performs several functions. If placed near the middle of a site it opens up wasted space by creating a new edge for people to cluster around. The Henry Moore sculpture and the Peace Garden in Nathan Phillips Square achieve this effectively. Consequently, park social life is influenced by a strong focal point. The focus becomes a place to congregate, especially if seating is available. A focal point also attracts users, as in the case of the Berczy mural. Invariably it strengthens a site's identity. Commissioning works of art, retaining historic features, maintaining and enhancing natural features, and architecturally terminating a view or establishing a theatrical backdrop are ways of creating focal points.

2.2.2 CENTRING

Centring imposes order onto unstructured open space. It creates useable edges, controls and directs users, provides site orientation, and develops a sense of place. A central space where paths converge draws people inward, ensuring that the middle of the park or plaza is as useful as its edges.

Berczy Park has a well-defined centre where all paths converge. The ebb and flow of large numbers of people maintain an interesting park centre. Ample seating allows people-watching and the fountain acts as a focal point. The layout concentrates users in a tightly defined space, encouraging interaction. An interesting feature exposed by user distribution mapping, (see Map 7), is that, unlike the other studied parks, the proportion of people using each park path was nearly equal. No single path was predominant or under-utilized. The map shows that a strong centre balances pedestrian flow. In general, centering defines space and controls activity, allowing a vibrant and intensive social setting to emerge.

Harbour Square has no active centre. Activity occurs on the edges, so the park interior is ignored. Pedestrian patterns are opposite from those at Berczy. The heaviest traffic is channelled away from the interior towards peripheral attractions, such as the Ferry Terminal, or along the boardwalk. Users are dispersed into small pockets, scattered along the periphery with little chance for interaction. Their attention is directed out of the park towards the harbour and Ferry Terminal. The existing path network and lack of a centre discourage user retention and interaction.

Centring is crucial to fostering intensive use in the middle of a park or plaza. Paths must converge to create a vibrant centre. Seating and a focal point should be added to enhance the role of the centre as a resting and meeting place.

2.2.3 LEGIBILITY

The degree to which a space is understandable: the ease with which its parts can be recognized and organized into a coherent pattern.

Site legibility is crucial for effective pedestrian circulation within a park or plaza. It also has serious implications for user enjoyment and safety perceptions. Illegibility leads to disorientation.

There are several elements which contribute to site legibility. The path system should be related to destinations. Entrance and exit points should be obvious. Signs, if necessary, should be informative and clearly direct users to various destinations. Focal points should serve as reference points. User frustration is caused by paths which lead nowhere, vegetation and fencing that obscure views, and poor signage.

Berczy is a highly distinct site. All paths lead to the centre and have a strong directional sense. The adjacent Gooderham Building and the fountain in the park act as reference points, and are linked to each other by a path. Every portion of a pedestrian's journey is clear, yet the overall site cannot be seen all at once.

Harbour Square, on the other hand, has many indistinct spots. The Queen's Quay entrance is obscured from view by the gaping hole and berm of the underground parking lot. On site, one path leads to a dead end overlooking another underground parking lot entrance, while the boardwalk along the lake peters out onto an ill-defined gravelled stretch between the park and the Terminal Warehouse at Harbourfront.

Legible sites are more memorable, enjoyable, and safer. Tourists, the elderly and the handicapped require highly legible sites. User population analysis will determine which sites require increased legibility.

To increase site legibility, planners should ensure that paths have a purposeful direction, signage is appropriate to the level of information required by the users, focal points and landmarks are utilized as reference points wherever possible, and special attention is given to visibility at entrance points.

2.2.4 INTRICACY

A highly differentiated environment which is complex without being complicated.

A rich and diverse setting is a positive component of park design. A successful park provides a variety of settings and moods which defies easy definition and possesses a visual richness. Any park where an individual can return many times and always find something new and stimulating is intricate. Changes in the rise of ground or vegetation distribution create these subtle expressions of difference. These differences are then exaggerated by the variety of uses that occur among them. The passage of time is also a significant factor contributing to site intricacy. A mature site is more interesting because of the layering of elements from many time periods.

Grange Park is an intricate place. The site has been slowly evolving since it was the Baldwin family estate in the early nineteenth century. The mature trees, historic buildings and wrought iron fences have blended successfully with the surrounding new architecture and park expansions of recent years. More importantly, the diverse user group territories and activities have enriched the site's intricacy.

Berczy is perhaps the best example of intricacy created on a new site. The formal layout, effective vegetation placements, introduction of art and focal points, and busy social life all contribute to its success. Intricacy has been further enhanced by incorporating views of the surrounding streetscape. The park capitalizes on the juxtaposition of nearby old and new architectures, giving it a maturity that masks its recent origins.

In contrast, Crombie and Commerce Court exhibit little intricacy. Both can be visually absorbed in a glance. There are no mysterious corners or intense social settings to challenge or delight the visitor. This lack of visual and social vibrancy translates into a perception of the sites as uninteresting. Commerce Court users frequently commented on the lack of colour and the predominance of hard surfaces which imparted a sterile feeling.

Intricacy creates interesting places. Users like small, densely furnished plazas with a variety of small, man-made and natural elements. Intricacy can be developed by creating a highly differentiated setting, utilizing the results of site evolution and capitalizing on the ambiance of surrounding mature streetscapes. A lack of intricacy translates into a site with a weak identity, which results in a decrease in users.

2.2.5 STREET VIEWS

The relationship between a park or plaza and the adjacent streets.

How open spaces and the adjacent sidewalks relate is critical to site success or failure. The transition between park and sidewalk should be easy. Pedestrians should be able to drift into a park or plaza without having to make a conscious decision. Stairs, gates, or a confusing layout will deter walk-through traffic from the street. A smooth transition between park and street increases impulse use. Furthermore, parks and plazas function best when they are natural resting places or short-cuts between destinations. Grange Park, for example, functions as an attractive link between Dundas and Queen streets.

Another important reason for considering the linkage between open space and streets is visual attraction. If people do not see a space, they will not use it. Points of interest, such as fountains, statues and bandshells draw passers-by into a park or plaza. Likewise, street activity and attractive buildings that can be viewed from the park or plaza provide visual interest for users.

Being able to see out of a park or plaza is just as important as being able to see in. A view of the street from within increases feelings of safety and, therefore, user comfort. Open spaces structured to facilitate natural surveillance from bordering streets are the best.

Commerce Court relates well to adjacent streets. There is a smooth transition between King Street and the small northern plaza. The fact that one can see through the glass tower into the interior courtyard assures the pedestrian that there is a logical sequence and exit beyond the immediate frame of vision. On the other side, the exit to Melinda Street is clear, and the steps are low and undemanding. This clear layout has enhanced the role of Commerce Court as a convenient shortcut between Bay and Yonge Streets.

Harbour Square, on the other hand, does not relate well to the street. The gaping hole of an underground parking lot and berms obscure visitors' realization that this is a public park. In addition, a significant proportion of the park cannot be observed from the street (see Map 3), thereby diminishing the site's profile and the user's safety perception.

Street views are vital for encouraging walk-through traffic and impulse use, which strengthen the park's or plaza's profile and allow for natural surveillance.

2.2.6 SITABILITY

Sitability can be determined by the total amount of sitting space: the lengths of all steps, ledges, benches, picnic tables, and anything else that can be used for seating.

William Whyte developed a formula for determining minimum seating requirements for New York City plazas. There, developers must now provide as many metres of sitting space as metres of outer property dimensions, or one linear metre per 30 square metres of plaza space.

With this formula each site's sitability can be determined. Berczy and Commerce Court function primarily as plazas or squares. Both exhibit the characteristics associated with plazas - predominantly passive use intensified at the mid-day period. Therefore, the formula of one linear metre of sitting space for every 30 metres of plaza space was directly applied. Both sites exceeded the amount suggested by the formula.

The minimum seating requirement used for downtown parks is one metre per 60 square metres. This assessment of sitability is based on the assumption that parks do not generally experience the same peak loads as plazas do, therefore, the seating requirements are reduced. Grange Park with 246.5 metres of sitting space is close to the recommended amount. Both Harbour Square and Crombie appeared to have a shortfall.

In all the parks studied, benches and picnic tables were being moved daily. Obviously, users wished to orient the seating to meet their needs. This is a strong indication that fixed or heavy seating is contrary to user needs.

Another interesting feature is the "best seat in the house" pattern. In both Grange and Commerce Court, one or two benches were used frequently and consistently throughout the day. In both cases, the seats had ample sunlight and were situated in the midst of the heaviest pedestrian flow (see 100% Location). In Grange, (see Map 10), the best seat had the characteristic traits of a good edge - a protected back and a view toward an active area.

Sitability is a critical factor in determining a site's use. The total amount of seating largely determines the number of stationary users on a site. However, seating is only effective if it has the following characterstics: comfort, orientation to area of visual interest, sunlight, a variety of sitting positions and protection at the back. Seating should be placed in the centre and along the edges of a site. Simply providing more seating may not make a site more successful, but in conjunction with other improvements, more seating will likely increase use.

SOCIAL MILIEU

Social Milieu - The social life of a park or plaza can be enhanced in several ways. By being responsive to user needs, learning from use patterns in existing sites, and providing elements which promote an active social life, a successful social milieu on a site can be created.

2.3 SOCIAL MILIEU

2.3.1 100% LOCATION

The area in a park or plaza where all activity converges; a place of intense activity.

In most parks or plazas there is a 100% location. This is where the highest levels of pedestrian activity and most intensely used seating is found. Users seem to create their own pockets of intense activity within a larger space. This tendency for congestion was observed in all five parks. A park or plaza's biggest attraction is people; we are drawn to places where others already congregate.

This phenomenon is seen in the user distribution maps for both Commerce Court and Grange, (see Maps 18 and 10). In Commerce Court, the heaviest pedestrian flow is between the east doors of the west tower and Melinda Street. Two of the most heavily used benches are located in the midst of this flow. In Grange, the activity centred along the western path. Here, again, the greatest number of stationary users and pedestrians were observed.

The 100% location is an important planning factor. By congregating together, users themselves create busy places within larger spaces. However, such activity does not promote overcrowding, since people have an inherent desire to space themselves from others.

On average, it was observed that park users avoided approximately 30 to 60% of available park space. Use was concentrated to a few benches and pathways. Densely populated park areas appear to be preferred by the majority of the park users.

2.3.2 ANIMATION, ATTRACTIONS AND AMENITIES

Animation is the process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and thereby promotes social interaction. Swimming pools or concerts are attractions which draw users to a park; washrooms and water fountains are common examples of park amenities.

Street entertainers, vendors, staged spectacles such as parades or fashion shows, an interesting piece of sculpture or a beautiful view will promote animation. All of these elements have the ability to bring people together, and encourage them to meet and mingle.

A rich street life is perhaps the highest form of animation. Break dancers, mimes, street musicians, and advocates of various causes all stimulate the animation process. However, most parks and plazas suffer from a lack of social animation. The life and attractions of the streets should be brought into the parks and plazas.

In Grange social animation is intense, diverse, and user-generated. The park has a good mix of actors and spectators who participate unselfconsciously in a continuous day-long spectacle. Though not as overt and energetic as the life of Yonge Street, people-watching in Grange will always yield something of interest. People partaking in Tai Chi, an artist painting, a man screaming at the trees, ladies harvesting linden blossoms, or a group of lively Chinese chess players are some of the players on Grange's animated stage. People go to Grange to do things.

The concept of attractions is a strategic approach to parks planning to draw users. Attractions are anything the public wants. A swimming pool, outdoor sports facilities, music, and special community and cultural events are all potential attractions. Examples of attractions in Toronto parks and plazas include the skating rink and musical events in Nathan Phillips Square, the staging of plays in High Park, or the noon-hour concerts at the Toronto-Dominion Centre.

Attractions have particular importance for problem parks which need help in attracting more users. The diversity of use naturally occurring in popular parks, such as Berczy or Grange, must be introduced into those parks and plazas which lack this activity. Determining which attractions to offer requires some trial and error, sensitivity to the site and its environs, and careful programming.

Animation, attractions and amenities are important factors in encouraging an active social life in outdoor spaces. A well-regulated network of vendors and food facilities near public open space, interesting and participative art, and other attractions contribute to making both public and private open spaces socially animated.

2.3.3 TERRITORIES AND TURFS

A territory is a space habitually used by the same individuals or groups to the exclusion of use by others.

Territory is claimed by turfing. Turfing can be expressed by habitual occupation of a particular bench, intimidation, hedges, fences, symbols, signs or use of security guards and cameras.

The spatial differentiation of user groups in a park is a natural process. The user profile map of Grange, (see Maps 11 and 19), shows territorial distinctions. Children are primarily in the play area. In the treed southwest quadrant, white males predominate. Elderly Chinese cluster along the western path and around the children's play area. Couples use the north central part of the park in front of Grange House. Elderly white females also tend to be in the northern half of the park and among the elderly Chinese.

Each park also functions as a home territory for particular types of users. Commerce Court and Berczy are typically used by workers from the surrounding office towers. Grange and Crombie are populated by the elderly, young mothers and their children, and those with time on their hands. Harbour Square is used by people living in the adjacent residential buildings and by a Metro-wide population drawn by the Toronto Island ferry service. Various ethnic groups also use a park as part of their community life. Grange Park, for example, is used as a meeting place for the City's Chinese community.

Territoriality can be a very contentious issue. Thirty percent of all responses by park users felt that the presence of marginals on a site has a negative impact on park enjoyment. No other factor elicited such a recurrent and negative reaction. The general public frequently underutilizes parks such as Allan Gardens and Moss Park because of the presence of numerous marginals. Their discomfort stems from an expectation that marginals will behave in ways that are threatening or embarrassing. However, such expectations are often exaggerated by misinformation and stereotyping.

Turfing is another form of territorial differentiation which can have significant implications for the functioning of a park. In Grange the turfing process is conducive to park life. Staff from the Art Gallery of Ontario maintain the flower beds near Grange House, thus providing unobtrusive surveillance of the northern extremity of the park. Similarly, the University Settlement House bordering on the park contributes users and extends its realm of influence by the placement of fencing, outdoor play space and landscaping in the park. In these examples turfing reinforces rather than diminishes park life.

But turfing can also negate the "publicness" of an open space. In Commerce Court, the continuous presence of security staff makes it clear to users that this is a privately-controlled space. In Harbour Square, the differentiation between the condominium owners' private realm and park visitors' public realm is blurred. On the user distribution and milieu maps for Harbour Square, park users clustered near the central path outside the ambiguous turfing zone. Consequently, large portions of the park are underutilized. In this case, the definition of what is public and what is private should be more clearly expressed.

Territorial affiliation and turfing are important components to consider when assessing park life. Groups or individuals which habitually gravitate to a park reinforce their personal bonding to that place. Sense of ownership is an essential component in the informal surveillance and community feeling indicative of a successful park. Territorial affiliation also indicates the importance of psychological support derived from like-minded others. Park users need the psychological support of linking as much as the physical support afforded by benches, garbage cans and other amenities. When designing a new site, and, especially when reworking an existing site, territorial affiliations must be considered. Turfing can be a beneficial factor in making a park successful. However, if the turfing messages diminish the "publicness" of a space through exclusion and behavioural control, then potential users may become inhibited and park life will consequently suffer.

3.0 CONCLUSION

In this study, field work and user observations yielded a variety of data concerning site design and user behaviour. Some collected data is quantitative. However, most of the findings and statements that comprise each factor and its planning implications are based on observations of human behaviour patterns and the observers' response to a particular park or plaza design.

This study attempted to isolate and understand the interplay of factors. The variety of discussed factors is not complete, as such a task is beyond the scope of this report. However, this list of factors will help planners appreciate the complex nature of park life, provide a checklist of features to be aware of, and a means of evaluating the success or failure of a park. Each planner should consider how these factors are expressed and interrelate at a particular site.

It would appear that a successful park has the following characteristics:

- It is surrounded by a mix of land uses which generate potential users all day. Nearby activities such as cafes, entertainment and recreational facilities are supportive of park life.
- It has wind protection, plenty of sunlight, shade options, and is quieter than the surrounding streets.
- It is enclosed and defined by structural elements; i.e. building edges or vegetation.
- Its enclosed edges are visually and physically permeable.
- It has a strong identity reinforced by easily recognizable and distinctive characteristics.
- Its entrances and exits are clearly seen and well-labelled.
- It is surrounded and penetrated by public streets to increase safety, "publicness" and accessibility, and it integrates major pedestrian path systems within its boundaries.
- It has no pockets of space isolated from view.
- Its equipment and layout is appropriate to its users' characteristics and pursuits, and vandalism, which is an indication of conflict between the user needs and site design, is minimal.
- Its seating is movable and oriented towards activity areas or interesting views.
- Its surface is composed of both hard and soft materials that are appropriate to intended activities and the site's character.
- Its distinction between private and public realms is clear.
- Its users are drawn by a unique attraction or adjacent land-use.
- It is the stage for a diverse range of activities and events.
- It exhibits local bonding signs such as staging of community events or habitual use by individuals or groups.
- It has a high maintenance level, indicative of a caring attitude by management and local citizens.

The thirteen discussed factors describe a total view of park life offering a "planning-for-use" approach for open space. It emphasizes users, and not just site design. The success criteria is user satisfaction and user need fulfillment, rather than some arbitrary quantitative performance indicators. The interplay of factors varies from site to site and over time. Quantitative indicators cannot respond to site-specific details which the planning-for-use approach can. In addition, there are three other features integral to the "planning for use" approach: site identity, marketing strategies and design assessment.

Site Identity

All five studied parks have an identity resulting from a combination of contextual, design and social milieu factors. Site identity should not be ignored in planning since it is an element of the site itself, the surrounding land uses, and the user population. Recognizing site identity is an important first step in achieving parks planning success. This approach balances the traditional reliance on quantitative data which categorizes open space by site size, and projected service area. Recognizing each site's uniqueness focusses attention on the site and its users.

Recognizing site identity can help the park planning process in several ways. First, it helps the planner to identify and capitalize on the strengths of a site and compensate for its weaknesses. Second, it provides clues on how to develop a site and implement change which does not conflict with established user patterns. Third, it encourages the planner to search for indigenous solutions to site problems. By accepting local culture and climate parameters, park design will respond closely to users' needs.

Marketing Strategies

Parks planning would benefit from integration of a strong marketing component. This approach directs park planning objectives towards developing well-functioning, people-attracting parks and plazas. Planners could learn a great deal about marketing goods and services from retailers who understand their clientele's needs and characteristics. A marketing approach would draw people into parks by integrating park use more fully into daily activity patterns. This may be encouraged by developing projects where people already gather and providing the attractions and amenities they want.

Design Assessment

Planners need a consistent format for assessing design proposals for park and plaza developments. A report accompanying all site development proposals would help accomplish this goal. This type of report should include discussion of the design objectives, and how they should be fulfilled. The factor list provides a reference point and framework for these types of reports. It also suggests evaluative means to assess proposals submitted to the City. The more consideration of these factors that are given to proposed design, the more likely it is that the proposed park will be successful.

This report's findings and recommendations promote a "total view" in parks planning. By embracing a circular design process, site planning and post-occupancy research informs design by monitoring park health. It views open space as an important land use which needs active promotion and careful study. To create successful parks, we must first understand how parks function.

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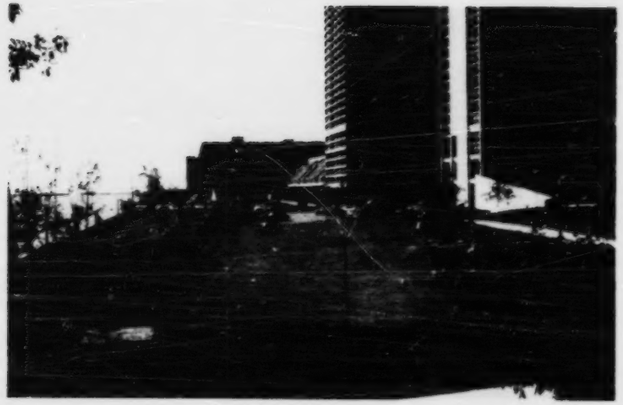
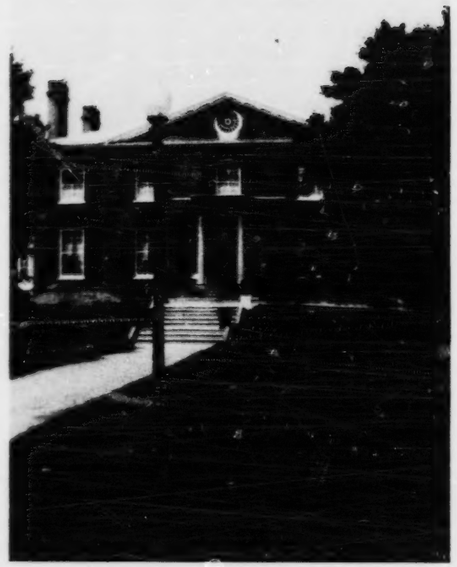
APPENDICES



HARBOUR SQUARE

BERCZY PARK



GRANGE PARK

PARK PROFILES

CROMBIE PARK

COMMERCE COURT

5.1 PARK PROFILES

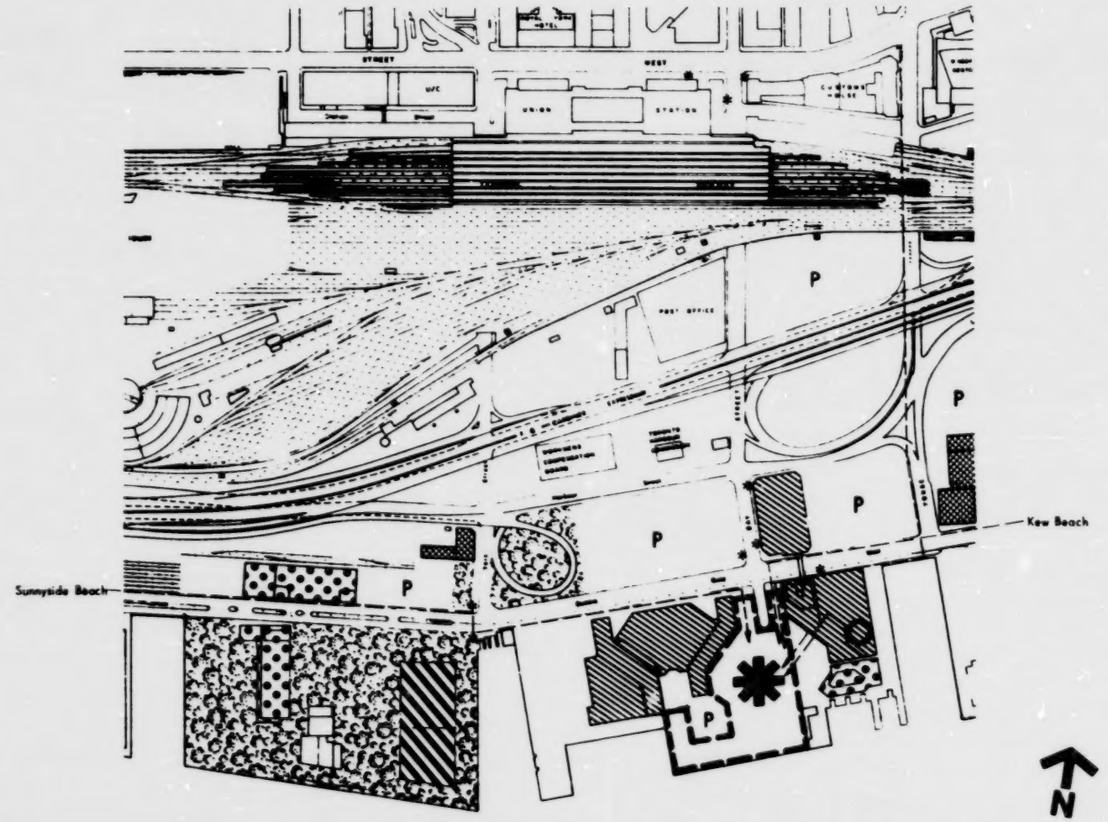
5.1.1 HARBOUR SQUARE

Context

Harbour Square is at the southern end of Bay Street on Toronto's waterfront. Its site is bordered by a large condominium complex, the Harbour Castle Hotel, and the Toronto Island Ferry Terminal. Luxury condominiums and recreational, retailing and entertainment facilities are the predominant surrounding land uses.

The mix of residences, work places and entertainment/retailing facilities attracts a steady potential clientele for the site. The Ferry Terminal is a supportive node generating large numbers of potential users. The park's population fluctuates dramatically throughout the day, reflecting ferry arrivals and departures.

Harbour Square has a large catchment area. Many of its users come from great distances. Most are drawn by the ferry, some by the Martin Goodman Trail bicycle path, while others are visitors touring the waterfront. To this disparate population are added users from the adjacent condominiums and work places. Most visit Harbour Square in conjunction with visits to other destinations.



LEGEND:

LAND USES
- COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL / RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL / HOTEL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- PARK / OPEN SPACE

- STUDY SITE
- TRANSIT STOP
- SUBWAY ACCESS
- P PARKING LOT
- CATCHMENT AREA - origins of selected users

HARBOUR SQUARE PARK

CONTEXT

Milieu

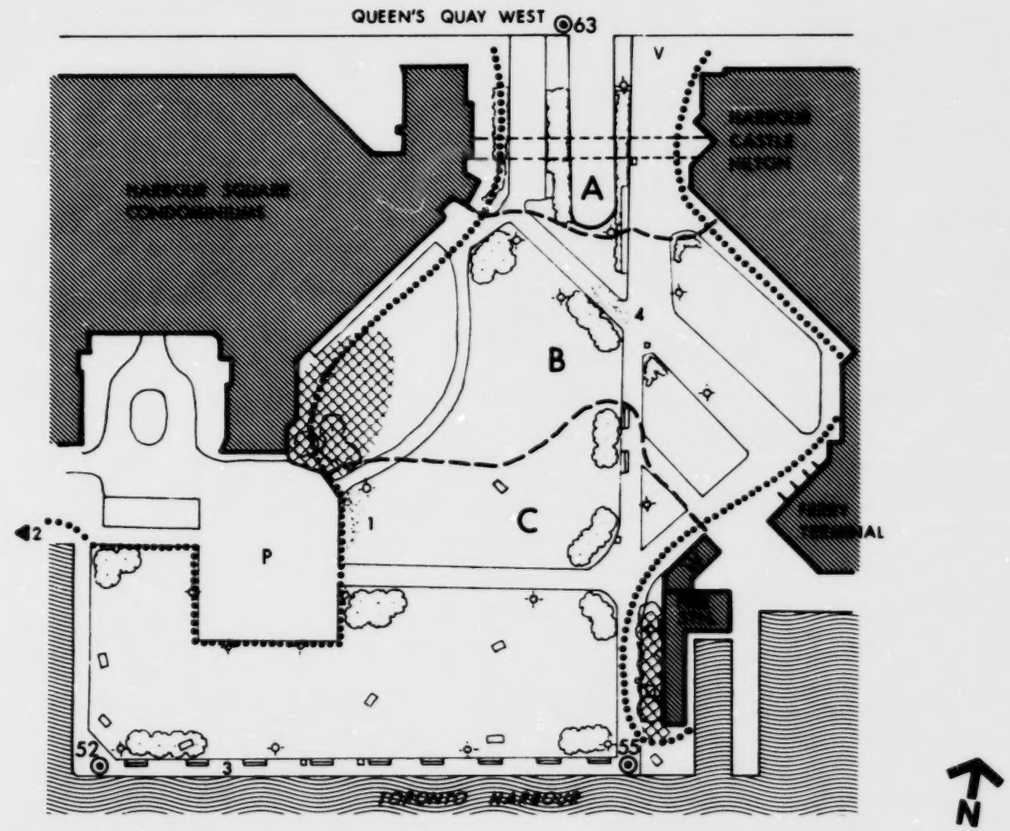
Site identity is overwhelmingly dominated by marine activities, such as the ferry service. The layout also contributes to a sense of separation from the rest of the City. Awareness of adjacent streets is minimal both visually and audibly on much of the site. Consequently, Harbour Square is a very quiet place.

Questionnaire respondents gave Harbour Square an overall rating of 8.6 (very good). This is probably due to its waterfront location, not site design. The lakefront setting is Harbour Square's biggest attraction. Users' attention is most often directed outward, towards the lake and boats.

The site's microclimate is dominated by the lake's proximity. Its closeness to the water makes it comparatively cooler and windier than other nearby areas. Users are exposed to cold winds from the lake because Harbour Square has few areas protected by tree cover or shelter.

The site appears incomplete and lacks legibility with a dead end path leading to a wall and a low, wet area (1), and an ill-defined gravelled connection to Harbourfront, which is nonetheless well used. (2). Because of the many nearby attractions, and a large tourist user population, site legibility should be improved.

Social animation is weak with few attractions to capture and retain users' attention. However, vendors occupy a space at the park entrance and moored sailboats add a special quality, with many conversations occurring between boat owners and passers-by (3). Site comfort is also low. There are only 67 linear metres of sitting space and part of one path is too steep for wheelchair users (4).



LEGEND:

- VIEWS TO STREET
  - A AWARE OF STREET
  - B VIEW OF STREET, BUT LARGELY UNAWARE OF IT
  - C NO VIEW OF STREET
- TURFS
- NOISE LEVEL (dbs.) - Monday, Oct. 7, 1985 - 13:15 - 13:20
- SECLUDED AREAS
- SITE PROBLEM / EROSION
- W WASHROOMS
- V VENDORS
- P PARKING LOT

HARBOUR SQUARE PARK

MILIEU

User Distribution

Young, white adults (18-33) are the predominant user group throughout the day, especially from noon until sunset. Male users predominate until late afternoon, after which time the ratio of men to women is equal.

Using the milieu map to compare user distribution to turfing, users appear to cluster around the central path and along the lake, outside the ambiguous turfing zone. Consequently, turfing may contribute to underuse of almost half the site. The definition between public and private space needs to be more clearly expressed.

The following are selected observations of user activity:

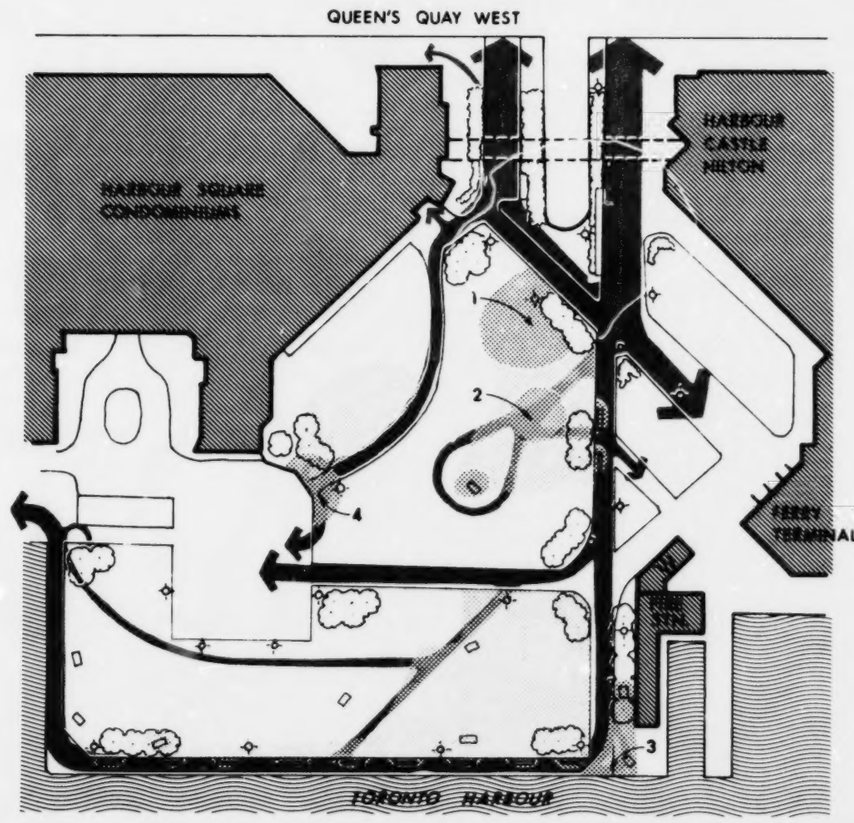
1 This spot is heavily used by day camps to organize before and after ferry trips. Between 70 and 200 people were observed here at various times.

2 Children enjoy playing on the wooden sculpture while waiting for the ferry. The nearby benches are used by their mothers. The sculpture is frequently used as a photographic "prop", and provides a needed focal point for the site.

3 The lookout point is popular, especially with those waiting for the ferry. The roof of the Marine Fire Station serves as a vantage point. However, public access is blocked by a locked gate.

4 The higher elevation makes this spot a popular lookout.

Because Harbour Square has no active centre, all activity occurs on the periphery. Pedestrian traffic is channelled away from the middle towards attractions, such as the Ferry Terminal and the boardwalk. Because users are dispersed into small pockets scattered along the periphery, there is little chance for interaction.



LEGEND:
- HIGH USE
- MEDIUM USE
- LOW USE
- PATHS

HARBOUR SQUARE PARK

USER DISTRIBUTION / PATHS

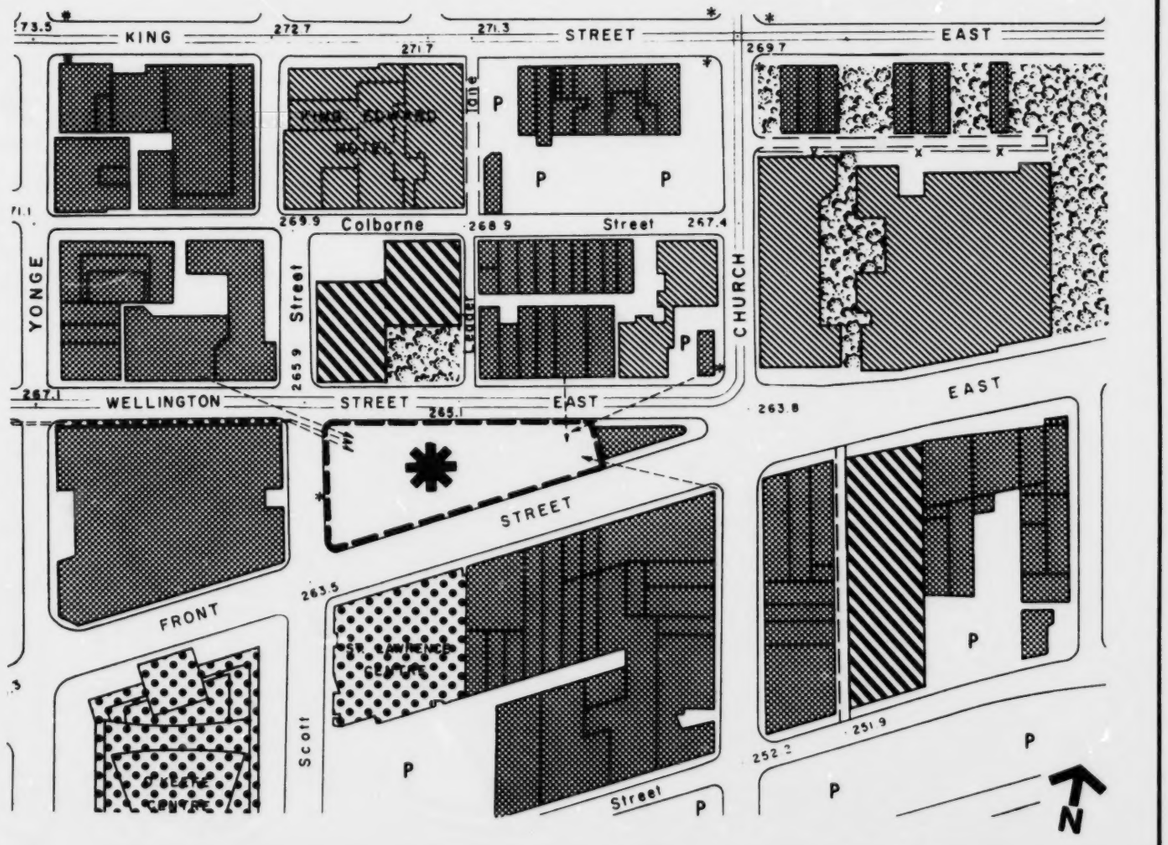
5.1.2 **BERCZY PARK**

Context

Berczy Park is a block east of Yonge Street on a site bounded by Front, Wellington, Church, and Scott streets. Retail, entertainment, restaurants, and design services are the primary surrounding land uses.

The contextual map highlights one of Berczy's strongest characteristics - enclosure. The site has a distinct room-like shape created by the surrounding buildings and streets.

Many users come from beyond the normal catchment area. This shows Berczy is chosen by preference, rather than just proximity.



LEGEND:

LAND USES
- COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL / RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL / HOTEL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- PARK / OPEN SPACE

- STUDY SITE
- TRANSIT STOP
- SUBWAY ACCESS
- P PARKING LOT
- CATCHMENT AREA - origins of selected users

BERCZY PARK

CONTEXT

Milieu

Berczy is an eclectic blend of art and nature. It is visually rich and spatially complex, almost carnival-like in appearance. The result is a relaxing, yet invigorating, ambiance. It functions much like a plaza, yet it has the appearance of a park. This is due to its equal distribution of hard and soft surfaces, and the well-defined centre.

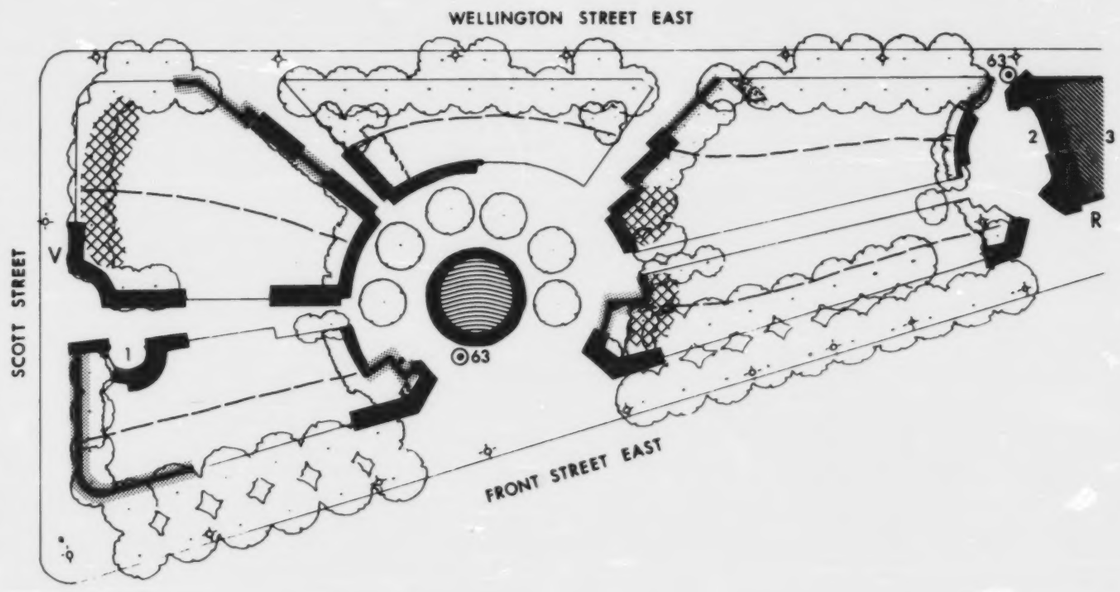
Berczy is an intricate place. Visual interest is provided not only by park components, but also by surrounding architectural facades. The component areas of Berczy include five paths that converge on a central circular plaza with a fountain, five grassed areas, a small amphitheatre (1), a small staging area (2), and sidewalks that wrap around the park perimeter. A wide range of activities is possible owing to the grassed lawns and staging area. It is a very sunny and exposed site, yet there are many places where users can find privacy.

Berczy is highly legible. All paths lead to the centre and have a strong directional sense, leading purposefully through the site. The Gooderham Building and fountain act as reference points which are linked to each other. A pedestrian's journey is clear, yet, the site is not seen all at once.

With 200 linear metres of usable seating, Berczy has an abundance of resting points. Much of the seating is created by low walls along the paths. However, almost half the walls are too high to be used; consequently a good portion of the seating potential is lost. A number of people were observed leaning against the walls while eating. Most would probably sit if the walls were lower.

Berczy relates well to the surrounding sidewalks. All the park is easily seen from the street. Pedestrians are drawn into it on natural paths. The designers wisely used the desire lines detailed by abundant footprints in the snow as the outlines for the permanent path network.

The Gooderham Building (3) is a positive building edge. Its mural creates a strong artistic focus for the park and some wind-protected seating. In addition, the building's restaurant operates an outdoor cafe during the summer which adds to life in the park.



LEGEND:

- HARD EDGES
- USABLE SEATING
- UNUSABLE SEATING
- SECLUDED AREAS
- SITE PROBLEM / EROSION
- CROWN OF BERM
- R OUTDOOR CAFE
- V STREET VENDOR
- NOISE LEVEL (dbs.) - Monday, Oct. 7, 1985 - 11:50
- FOUNTAIN / WATER FEATURE

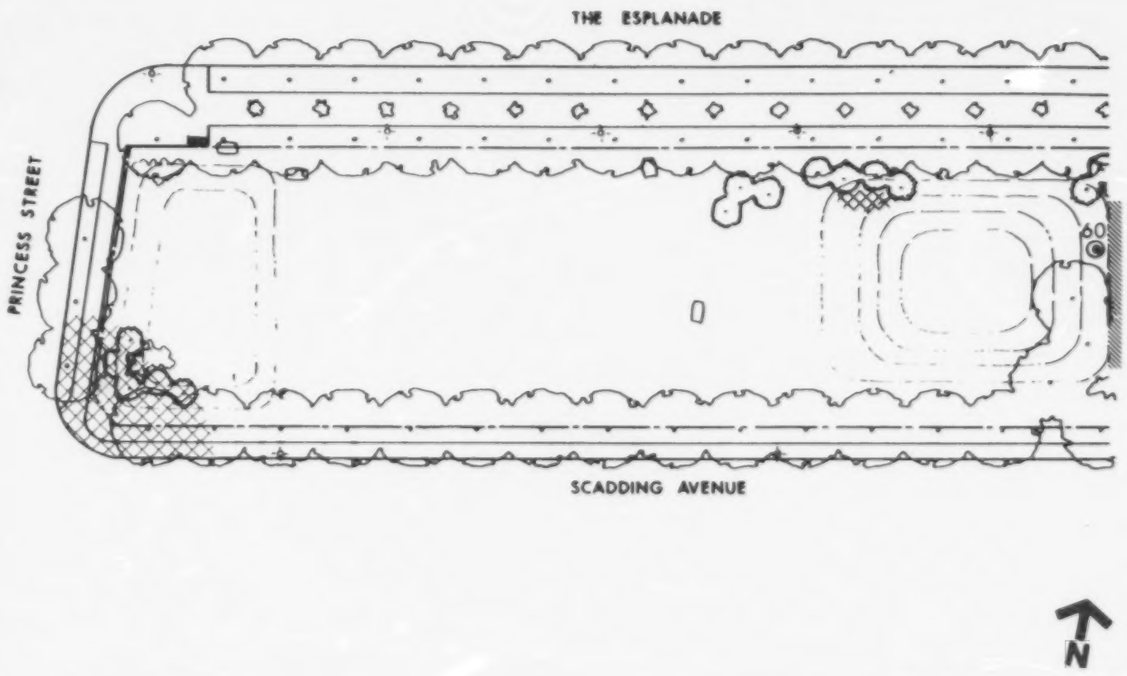
BERCZY PARK

MILIEU

Milieu

The site lacks a strong identity. Unlike other components of Crombie Park, it has no identifiable feature. Rows of trees on both sides help to define it spatially, and give it a formal, yet casual, appearance. The site is grassy, sunny, and exposed, with a berm at either end. The layout is flexible for a variety of passive or active uses. The openness gives users a sense of freedom. Many children were observed running and jumping in the park.

The site relates well to the surrounding streets. Being bordered entirely by public streets and sidewalks, it has a very public feeling. The entire site is visible from the street so it receives natural surveillance.



LEGEND:

- EDGE CONDITION
- SECLUDED AREA
- SHADED AREA
- NOISE LEVEL (dbs.) - Monday, Oct. 7, 1985 - 12:30

CROMBIE PARK

MILIEU

User Distribution

Berczy is well-used all day. Use is fairly constant in the morning, averaging around 15 people at any time. Morning users are frequently marginals, typically observed in the secluded, densely landscaped eastern half of the park. An increase of walk-through traffic occurs just after 10 a.m., presumably caused by office workers on their coffee break.

Use increases dramatically at noon with 80-100 people on site. These are mainly white-collar employees enjoying their lunchbreak.

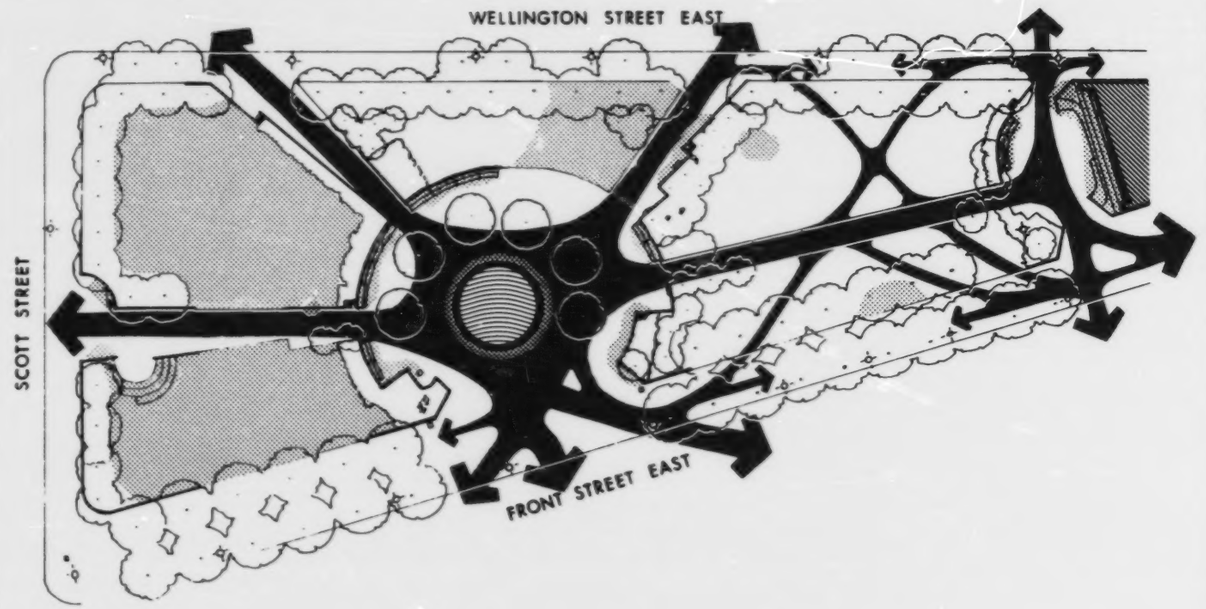
By mid-afternoon, the number of users averages around 40. Evening use tends to be higher than morning use because of theatre-goers and strollers.

Berczy users rated site attractiveness as the park feature they liked most. Interestingly, they also cited quietness - an unexpected response since the recorded decibel level (63 dBs) is the second highest after Commerce Court. There is, obviously, some other factor at play here. One possibility is that the soft screen of vegetation and the pleasant sound of the fountain moderates the external noise in this busy downtown location.

Questionnaire respondents cited the presence of transients and seating design as the things they most disliked about the park.

Berczy users listed eating lunch as their most frequent park activity, followed by other forms of passive recreation (reading, sunbathing and people watching). The park is comfortable and is frequently used by people to pass time or as a meeting place. Many users like to soak their feet in the fountain. At lunchtime, they bring towels or lawn chairs to stretch out on the lawns.

Users gave Berczy a rating of 8.2 (good). It seems to satisfy user needs with a minimum of site amenities. It is a place for strollers, sunbathers, tourists and picture takers. The layout highlights the users' activities and enhances the buildings around it. Above all, Berczy fits the definition of an intricate place - it is complex without being complicated.



LEGEND:
- HIGH USE
- MEDIUM USE
- LOW USE
- PATHS

BERCZY PARK

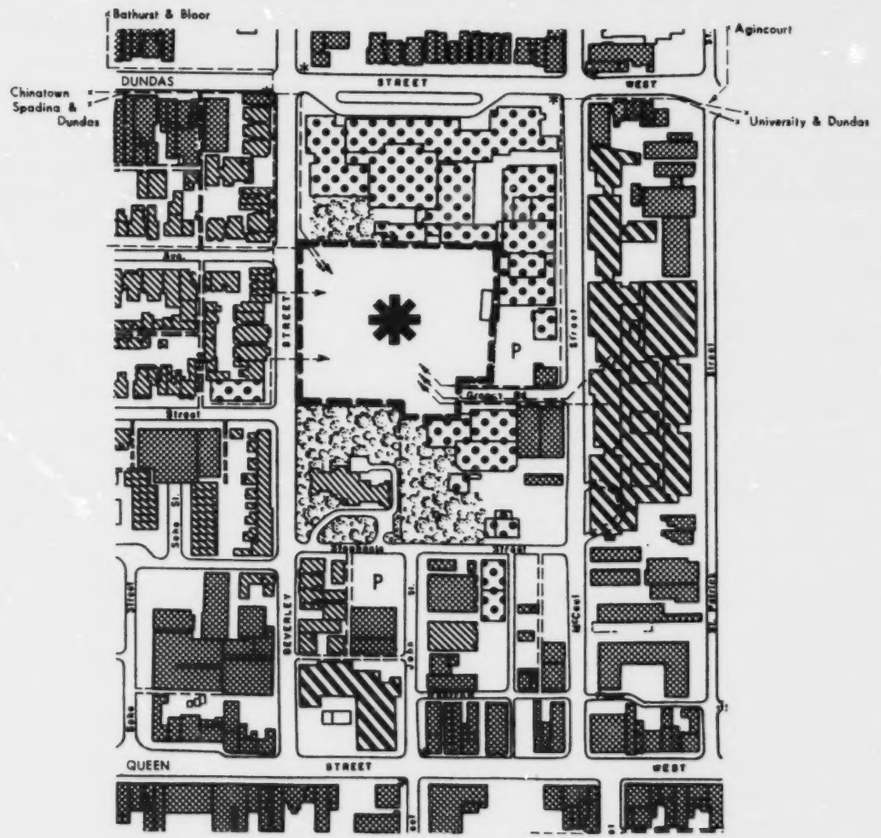
USER DISTRIBUTION / PATHS

5.1.3 GRANGE PARK

Context

Grange Park lies south of Dundas Street between Beverley and McCaul streets. The park benefits from the surrounding land use mix. Park use was constant throughout the observation period with a distinct increase at lunchtime. Local residents kept park use relatively high in the morning and evening, while employees from adjacent work places pushed the site population to its peak at lunch hour.

Grange's proximity to Chinatown on Dundas Street is perhaps the single most important factor determining the user population. Grange serves as a meeting place for the Chinese community. Chinese from all over Metropolitan Toronto and beyond visit the park. Asian respondents to the questionnaire noted areas of origin as distant as Kitchener-Waterloo, as well as downtown localities outside the usual two- to three-block radial catchment area. Most Asian users live near the park or combined a visit to Grange with shopping, dining, or visiting relatives in Chinatown.



LEGEND:

LAND USES
- COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL / RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL / HOTEL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- PARK / OPEN SPACE

- STUDY SITE
- * TRANSIT STOP
- P PARKING LOT
- CATCHMENT AREA - origins of selected users

GRANGE PARK

CONTEXT

Milieu

Grange's intricacy, focus, enclosure, street views and territorial distinctions contribute to its milieu.

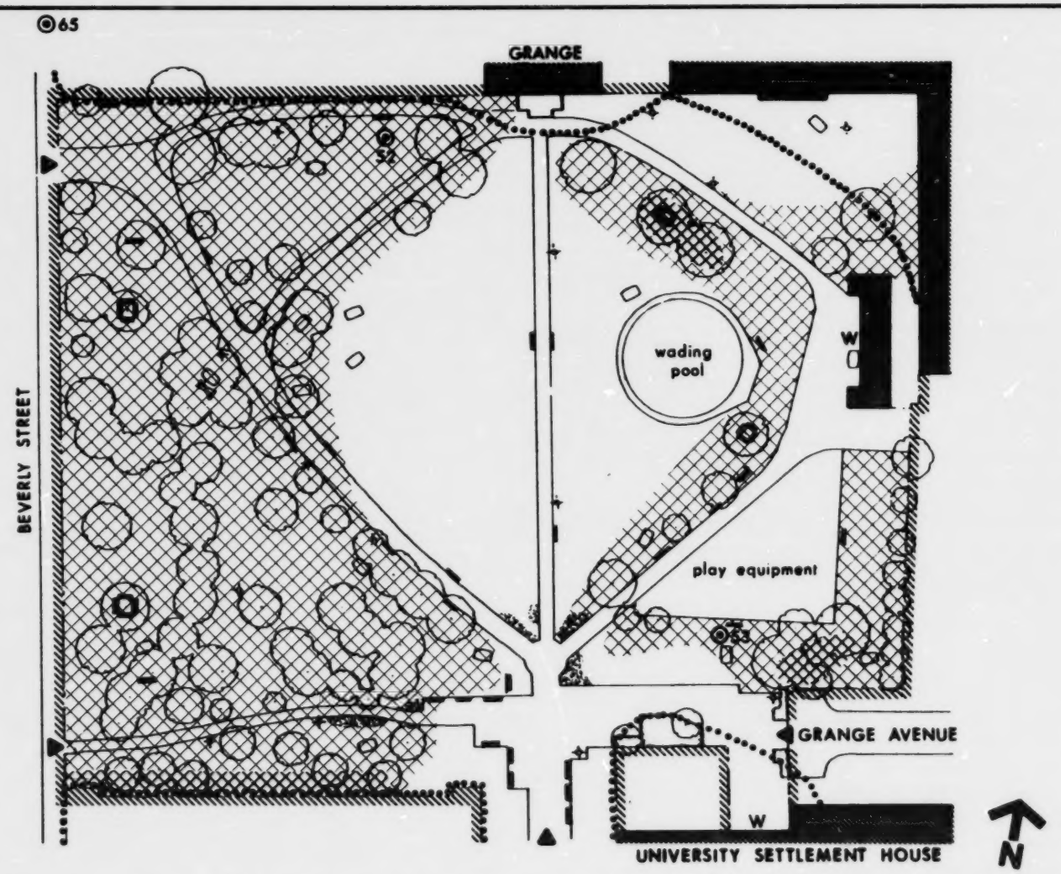
It is an intricate place, equally divided between exposed and semi-secluded areas. These areas offer opportunities for various activities and mood settings. The mature trees and historic buildings further enhance the site's intricacy. Grange House creates an architectural focal point and "stage" in the central area of the park.

The nearly continuous enclosed edge of fences and buildings defines the park spatially and controls the user dispersion. Most of this enclosed edge is impermeable, but well serviced by entrance and exit points.

Incorporating parts of Grange Avenue and John Street into the park has increased its "publicness" and accessibility, and enhanced its use potential.

In Grange, turfing is conducive to park life. Art Gallery of Ontario staff maintain flower beds near Grange House, providing unobtrusive surveillance of the park's northern end. University Settlement House contributes users to the park and provides a wide variety of amenities.

Grange received a high rating of 8.5 from questionnaire respondents. Users expressed generally positive comments concerning the attractive site layout, especially its naturalness (trees, grass, etc.). Complaints focused on minor problems, such as poor playground area drainage and maintenance, and the presence of marginals.



LEGEND:

- SHADE / SECLUDED
- INTERMEDIATE SHADE / SEMI-PRIVACY
- SUNNY / EXPOSED
- EDGE CONDITION
- SITE PROBLEMS / EROSIONS
- TURFS
- EXIT / ENTRANCE POINTS
- W WASHROOMS
- NOISE LEVEL (dbs.) - Monday, Oct. 7, 1985 - 11:00

GRANGE PARK

MILIEU

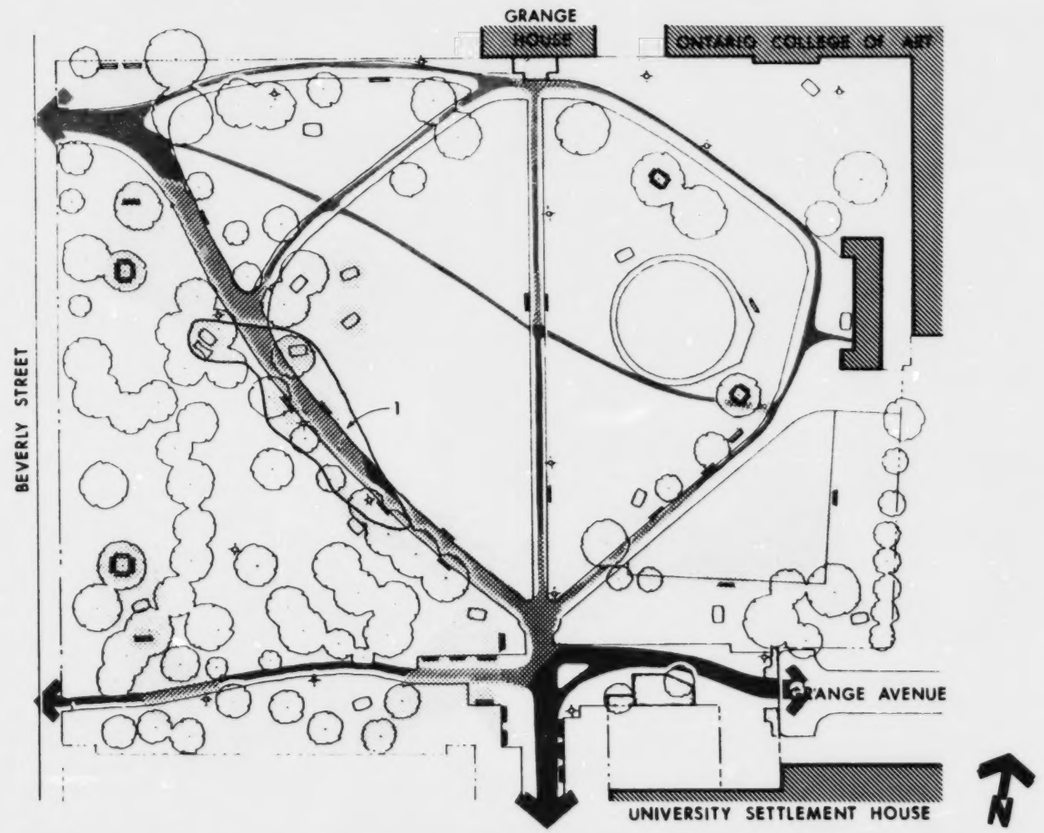
User Distribution

Grange has a distinct daily use rhythm. From early to mid-morning, Grange is dominated by elderly and middle-aged Chinese users. They walk briskly around the paths or partake in Tai Chi exercises. By late morning, most elderly Chinese sit and chat in the shade, and young mothers bring their children to play in the park. The play area is well used, with nearby benches occupied by watchful parents.

At lunchtime, white users outnumber Asians, as employees arrive from surrounding work places.

By early afternoon, Chinese users again begin to predominate. Many elderly Chinese continue to relax and chat in the park until sunset. Many people also walk through the park after work. Joggers and people walking their dogs visit in the evening.

Most user activity is centred along the western path, where the number of stationary users and pedestrians creates a 100% location (1). The tendency to create an edge condition is seen by the number of users clustering along the paths and where seating is provided. A secondary activity zone is centred near the play area.


GRANGE
HOUSE
ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART
BEVERLY STREET
1
1
1

User Profile

The hatch-marked areas on the adjacent map show user group spatial differentiation. This is a natural process, reflecting the varying needs and interests of the user population. All park user populations manifest this differentiation to some degree, but, of the five studied parks, this pattern was most clearly expressed in Grange. The most obvious reason for this is the bi-cultural nature of the user population - Asian and non-Asian. In addition, the size and intricate layout of Grange allows a variety of populations to use the park simultaneously.

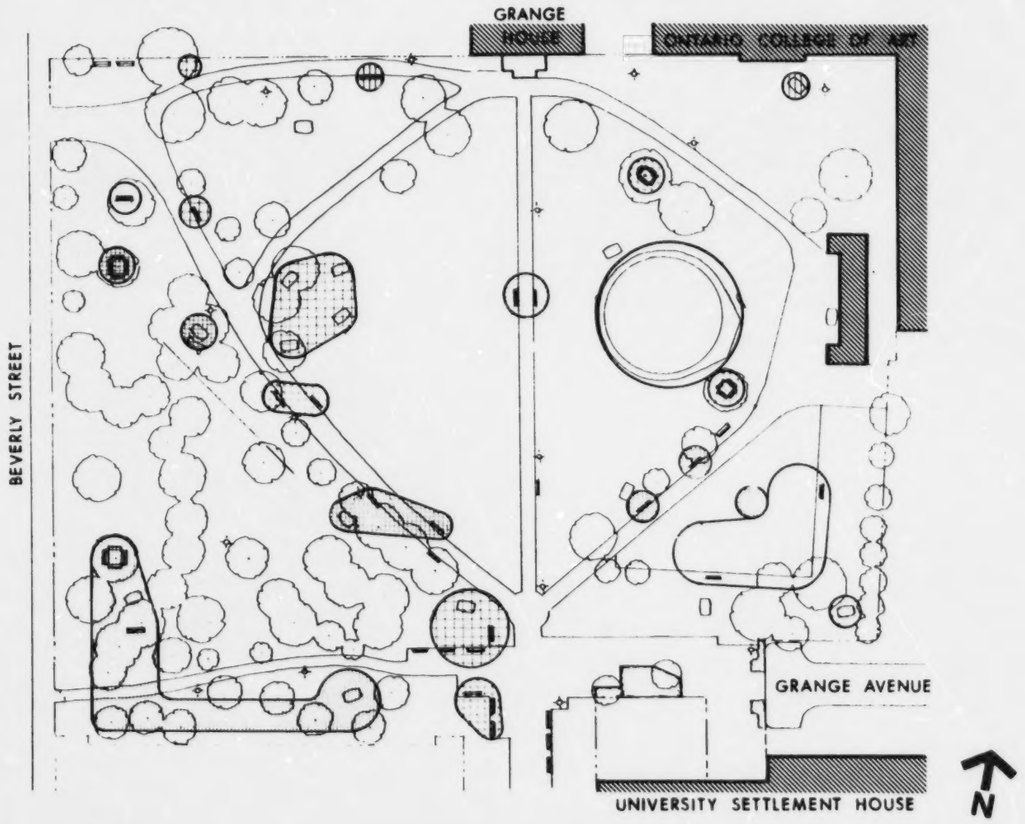
In the well-treed southwest quadrant white males predominate, with few females or children. This population is a mixture of older and younger men who spend their time talking, reading, or laying on the grass or picnic tables. Children are primarily in the play area. Few children were found among the predominantly elderly users in the 100% location. In general, children are in the east half of the park while elderly users were in the west half.

Elderly Chinese men and women cluster along the western path and around the children's play area. Many elderly users participate in light exercises and then sit to chat with friends for long periods of time.

Teenage and young adult couples enjoyed the north central part in front of Grange House. This open area could be described as "the stage", with Grange House acting as a backdrop.

Elderly and middle-aged white females also tend to be in the north half of the park and among the elderly Chinese. They were distinctly absent in areas with a predominance of white males.

Several spots were recurrently used for Tai Chi exercises in the early morning. The spots chosen usually had a soft surface (sand or grass) and were lightly shaded.



LEGEND: PREDOMINANT USER TYPE

- ASIAN MALES
- ASIAN FEMALES
- WHITE MALES
- WHITE FEMALES
- TEENAGERS (13 - 17 years old)
- CHILDREN (0 - 12 years old)
- MIXED USER POPULATION
- PARK BENCHES, PICNIC TABLES

GRANGE PARK

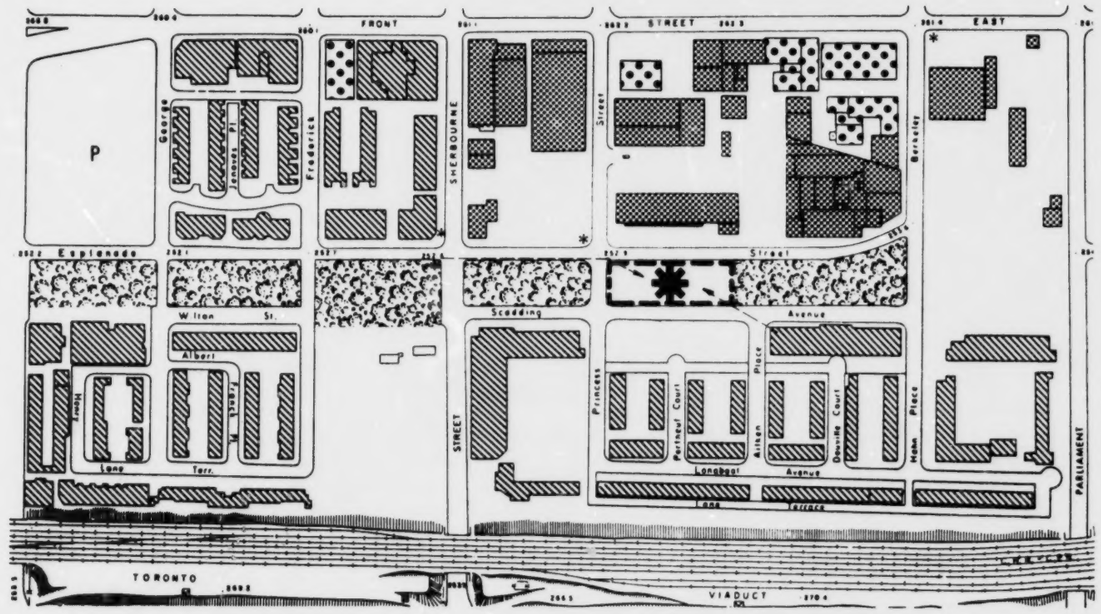
USER PROFILE

5.1.4 **CROMBIE PARK**

Context

The site studied in this report is part of Crombie Park, which is a long linear park stretching from Jarvis to Parliament streets. It was constructed in conjunction with the St. Lawrence Housing Project in the 1970s. The site is bordered by The Esplanade, Scadding Avenue, and Princess Street.

Residential land use south of the park is composed of townhouses and medium-rise apartment blocks. To the north is a mixture of industrial, commercial and entertainment uses. While the park was not used extensively, it benefited from constant activity around it, generated by the surrounding land uses.



LEGEND:

LAND USES
- COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL / RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL / HOTEL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- PARK / OPEN SPACE

- STUDY SITE
- * TRANSIT STOP
- P PARKING LOT
- CATCHMENT AREA - origins of selected users

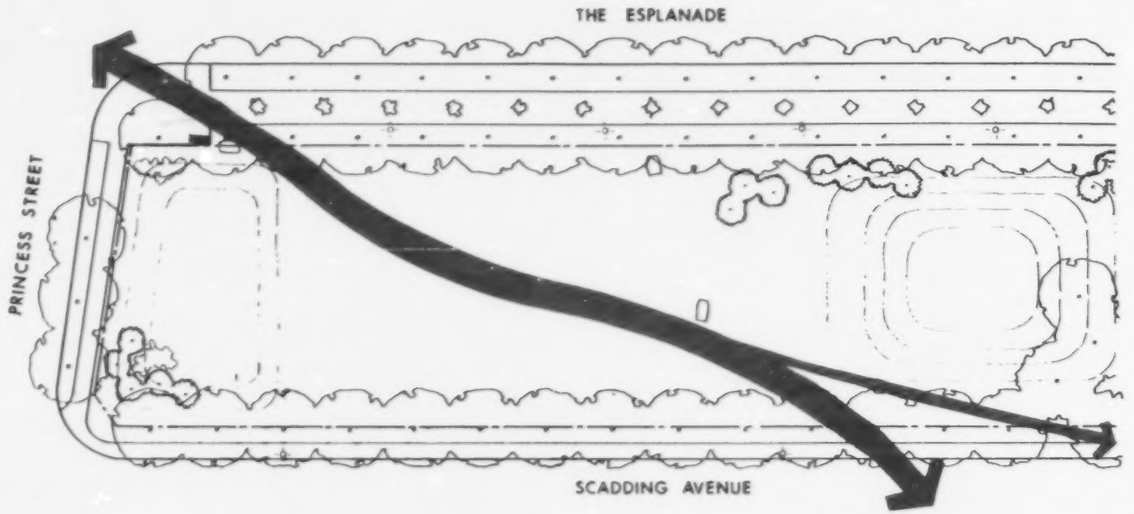
CROMBIE PARK

CONTEXT

User Distribution

What is striking about this site in comparison to the rest of Crombie Park is its lack of activity. The site functions primarily as a short-cut to reach other destinations. The consistently strong desire line runs diagonally from southeast to northwest.

Activity is primarily concentrated outside the park space on a bench facing The Esplanade. Bench users were observed people-watching, eating and waiting at this location while the park remained devoid of activity.



LEGEND:
- MEDIUM USE
- LOW USE
- PATHS

CROMBIE PARK

USER DISTRIBUTION / PATHS

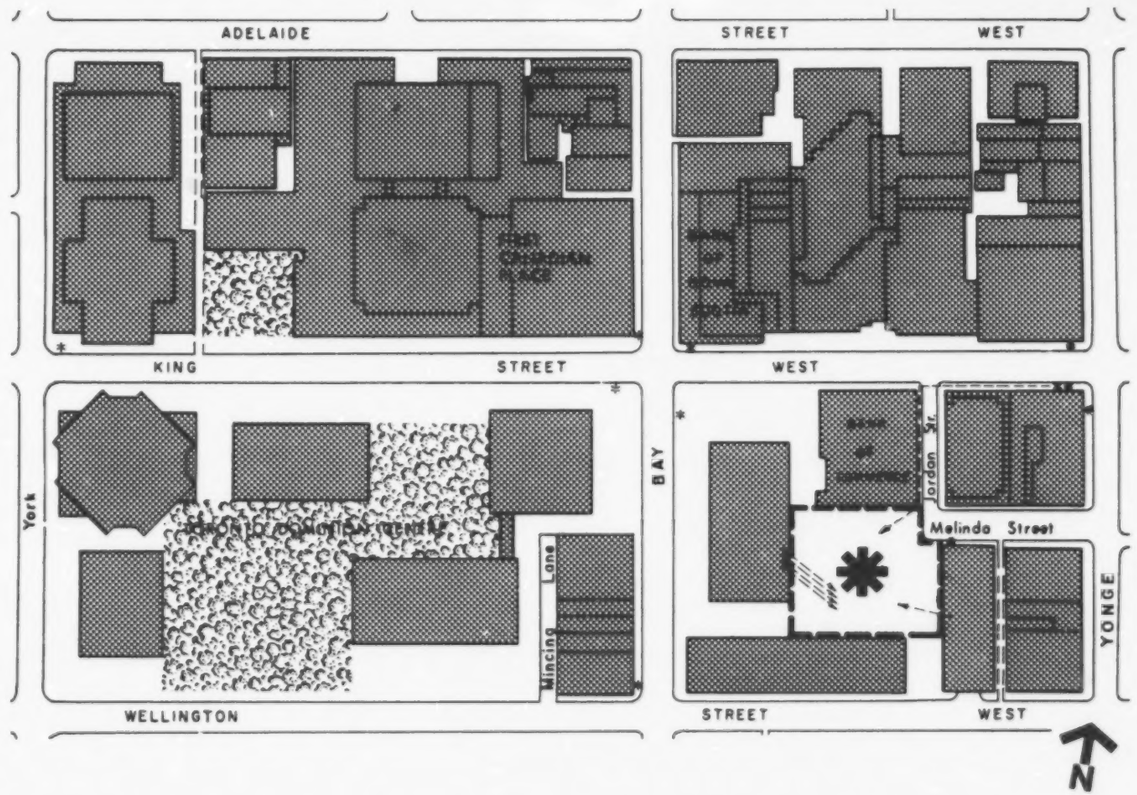
5.1.5 COMMERCE COURT

Context

Commerce Court occupies the southeast corner of King and Bay streets, the major intersection of Toronto's Financial District. The complex consists of an open courtyard enclosed by four buildings: the 57-storey west tower, a 30-storey tower (the "Old Bank"), a 13-storey tower, and a five-storey building. Designed by I.M. Pei, it is owned and maintained by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce as its head office.

With several thousand office workers, easy access for users to the subway and over a hundred shops and services, Commerce Court would appear to be an ideal plaza. But the layout actually discourages use of the plaza space because the restaurants, shops, services and transportation links are all located underground.

The catchment area for Commerce Court is the four buildings comprising the Court complex. The on-site building density endows the plaza with a large number of potential users.



LEGEND:

LAND USES
- COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL / RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL / HOTEL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- PARK / OPEN SPACE

- STUDY SITE
- * TRANSIT STOP
- SUBWAY ACCESS
- CATCHMENT AREA - origins of selected users

COMMERCE COURT

CONTEXT

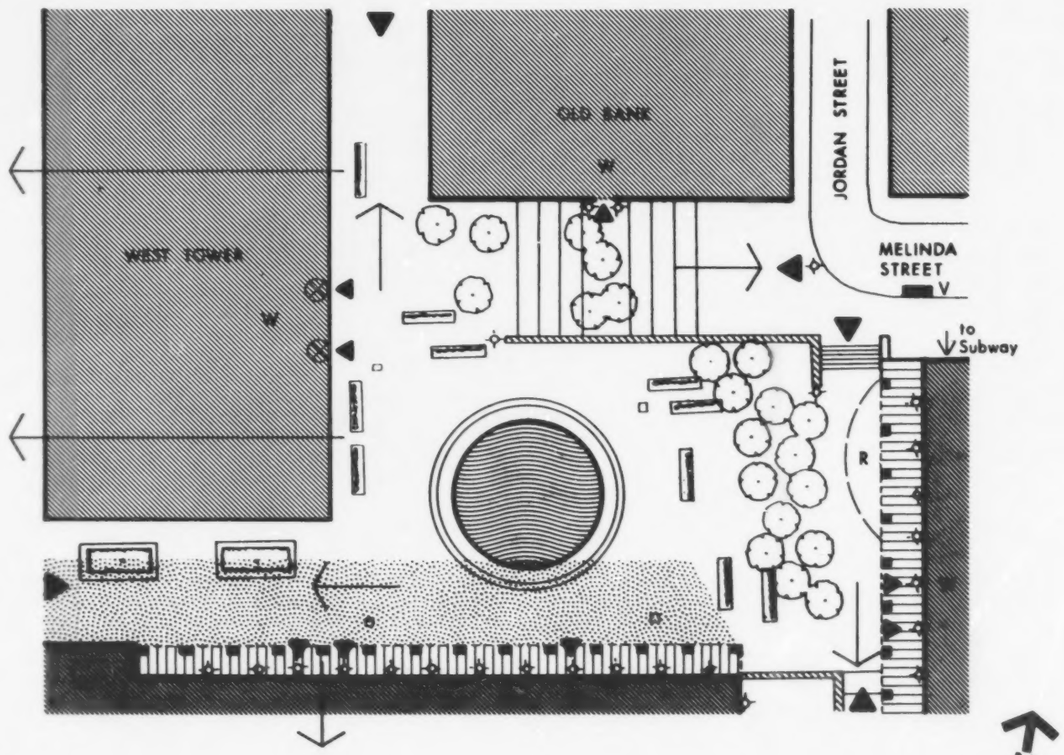
Milieu

Commerce Court projects a no-nonsense image - stately, imposing, prestigious and dull. It is a tightly enclosed space, much like a large outdoor room with the buildings creating the walls. High quality materials, such as granite and teak, are used in the plaza space. However, the great paving expanse which matches the limestone finish of the surrounding buildings creates an oppressive greyness throughout the site. There is very little spatial definition; consequently, the whole site can be observed in one sweeping glance. Limited visual interest is provided by the fountain and juxtaposition of old and new architecture around the Court. The fountain creates the focal point of the space.

Commerce Court relates well to its adjacent streets. There is a smooth transition between King Street and the small northern plaza. The pedestrian is assured of a logical sequence and exit beyond the immediate frame of vision by a view through the glass tower into the interior courtyard. On the other side, the exit to Melinda Street is clear, and the steps are low and undemanding. This clear layout has enhanced the role of Commerce Court as a convenient shortcut between Bay and Yonge streets. Though very little is visible outside the plaza space, street views are maintained by the see-through aspect of the west tower and parts of the south building.

Most of the buildings defining the plaza space provide positive building edges for users. The ledges on the south side of the Old Bank function like a lunchroom counter and offer protected niches for sitting. The two colonnades along the southern and eastern sides of the plaza are very beneficial, especially in rainy weather.

Commerce Court is socially constrained. Until 1966, the Court hosted fashion shows, musical concerts and art exhibits. However, problems related to the site's design frustrated the success of the program. The wind carried the ground level noise upward and distracted people working in the west tower offices. Consequently, management decided to suspend all such activities. The plaza is now used for passive activities such as reading or eating. The presence of security staff emphasizes that this is a privately controlled space.



LEGEND:

- EDGE CONDITION
- CONTINUOUS SHADE
- COLONADE
- ENTRANCE / EXIT
- VIEWS TO STREET
- W WASHROOM
- R RESTAURANT
- V VENDOR
- FOUNTAIN / WATER FEATURE

COMMERCE COURT

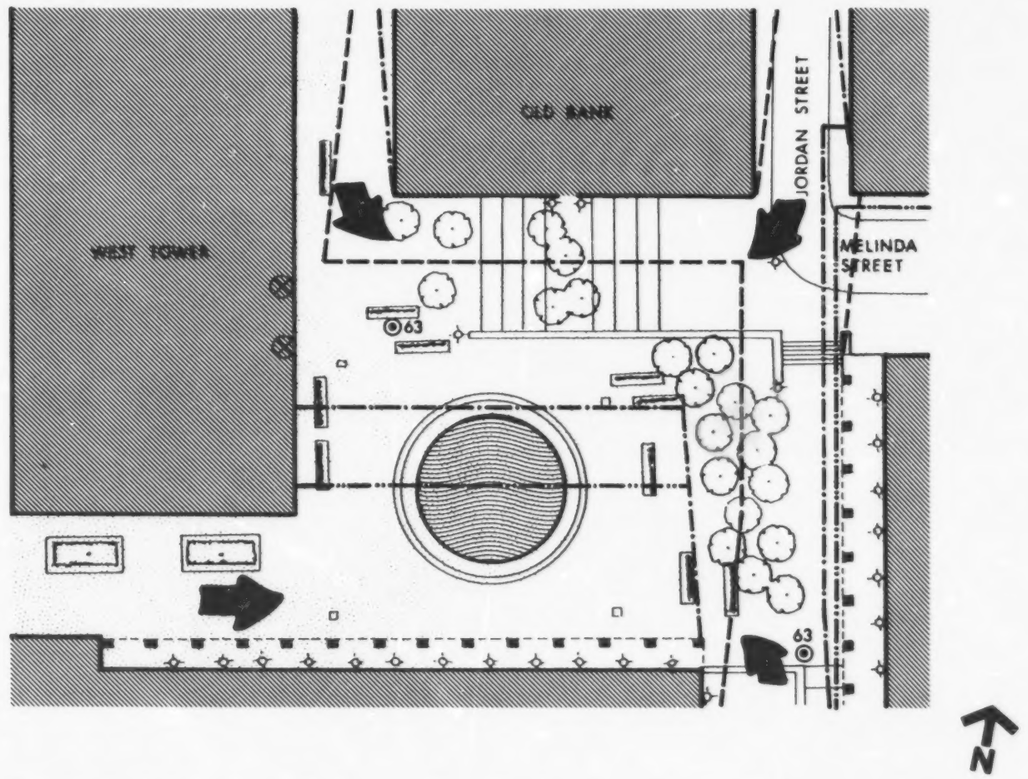
MILIEU

Microclimate

Commerce Court has significant microclimatic problems. User complaints were related to high wind velocities and lack of sunlight. Together these two factors give Commerce Court a noticeably windier and colder climate. The 56-storey west tower creates high wind currents which are channelled through gaps between buildings onto the plaza below. The building management has attempted to buffer the wind effect by placing evergreen trees during the winter in the north plaza, facing King Street. This has negligible benefits because the trees are located far from the full force of the wind. Furthermore, available sunlight is blocked by buildings on the south side of the plaza. This is especially significant in the spring and fall when the warmth of the sun is vital to user comfort.

The noise level was uncomfortable on windy days. A combination of street traffic noise, the tunnelling of wind through building gaps, and the fountain all contributed to a low, but persistent rumble on the site.

◉67



LEGEND:

- FULL SHADE
- INTERMEDIATE / PARTIAL SHADE
- FULL SUN
- SHADOW - SEPT. 13
- SHADOW - OCT. 3
- SHADOW - NOV. 8
- WIND DIRECTION
- NOISE LEVEL (dbs.)- Monday, Oct. 7, 1985 - 11:30

COMMERCE COURT

MICROCLIMATE / ENVIRONMENT

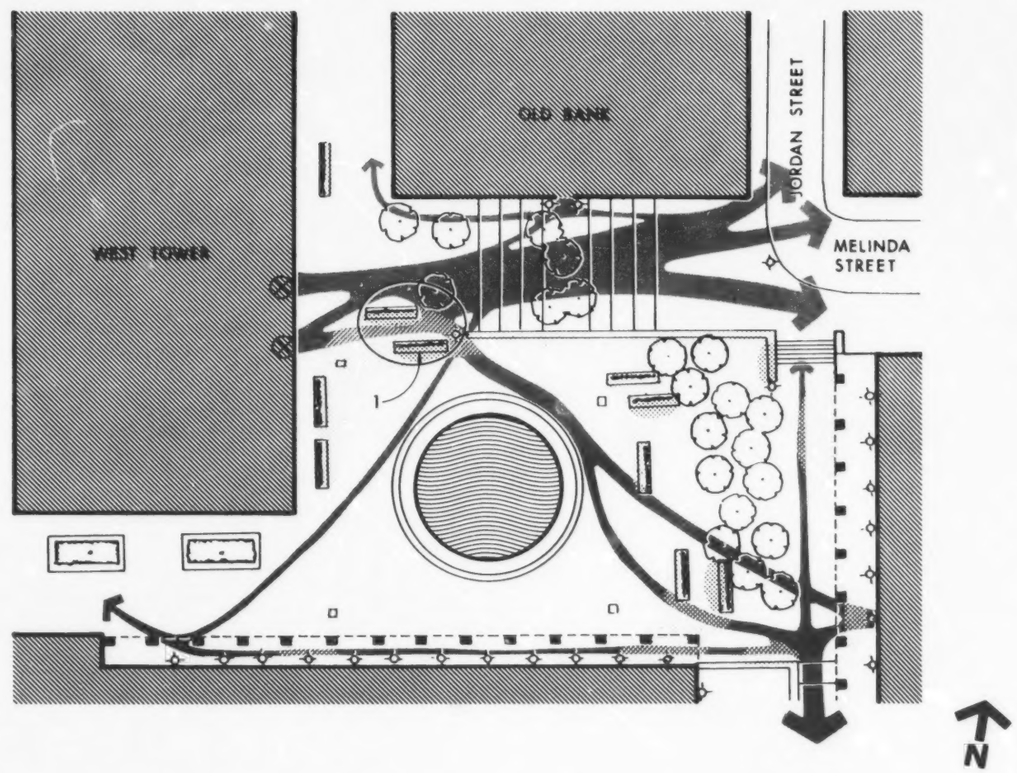
User Distribution

Commerce Court users are primarily from surrounding buildings. Almost all site activity is related to the workday patterns of the surrounding offices; people enjoying coffee breaks, eating lunch, making deliveries, or maintenance people keeping the plaza tidy. The vast majority of people merely pass through the plaza and do not linger. Approximately 1,600 people were counted crossing the plaza at lunchtime.* However, very few actually used the plaza. Stationary users do not linger for long either. Individuals observed at random had lengths of stay between 7 to 13 minutes.**

Stationary users are situated, not surprisingly, where there is seating. On the adjacent map it can be seen that they collect along the plaza edges - on the benches, along the granite ledge, and in the south and east side colonnades. The most frequently used seats have a southern orientation.

The most intensively used plaza part is the pedestrian route between the east doors of the west tower and Melinda Street. Two of the most frequently used benches are located within this flow, resulting in a 100% location (1).

Questionnaire respondents gave Commerce Court the lowest rating (6.6) of the five parks studied. Most users cited the fountain, cleanliness, and presence of people as the plaza features they liked most. Windiness and the generally hard and grey plaza appearance were the primary complaints. Many users (44.4%) noted proximity as the reason for visiting Commerce Court. Approximately 30% of questioned users like the plaza "as is." However, 71% had suggestions for improvement: more vegetation, more seating, and a drinking fountain.



LEGEND:

- HIGH USE
- MEDIUM USE
- LOW USE
- PATHS

COMMERCE COURT

USER DISTRIBUTION / PATHS

* Based on a head count taken on August 26, 1985 (12:30 - 13:30)

** Based on observation on September 9, 1985 (12:00 - 13:00). The day was windy and cool.

REPORT DESIGN AND METHODS

5.2 REPORT DESIGN AND METHODS

The study employed the following methods: An evaluative index, user observation and ecological mapping, a park user questionnaire survey, and photographs. Most data were gathered in August and September, 1985.

A multiple-methods approach was used in data collection. This permitted the gathering of much data and, additionally, allowed an important validity check through data overlap.

5.2.1 EVALUATIVE INDEX

The evaluative index is a list of factors used to assess the five sites. It resulted in a comprehensive inventory of each site's design features. The factors used in the index derived from a wide range of sources in environmental-behavioural research. With this information, behavioural settings and design quality were assessed.

An attempt was made to keep the evaluative index as objective as possible. The data collection is oriented to simple recording of site elements and amenities. This data was then used later to investigate more subjective areas of inquiry, such as the "publicness" of the site, safety conditions, and site identity.

The evaluative index is seen as an adjunct to the observations of park users. Both sources were used together to develop a complete understanding of the site.

DESIGN HARBOUR SQUARE

Sit ability

is measured by linear metres of sitting space. This is measured by adding up the lengths of all steps, ledges, benches, chairs and anything else that is sat upon. The minimum requirements are the provision of as many feet of sitting space as there are feet in the outer dimensions of the property. The following are guidelines to determine what constitutes useable seating:
Height of seat - seating higher than 36" (91cm) or lower than 12" (30cm) is uncomfortable. The optimal seat height is 18"-20" (45cm-51cm).
Seating depth - should be between 14"-16" (35cm-41cm).

Note all seating on map with orientation.

Primary seating (benches, chairs)

Type	Number	Seating Space (m)	Material
BENCHES (SHORT)	9	21.6	WOOD
PICNIC TABLES	9	16.2	"
BENCHES (LONG)	2	9.7	"
		TOTAL 47.5	

Secondary seating (ledges, steps)

Type	Number	Seating Space (m)	Materia
LEDGES	1	19.5	CONCRETE
		TOTAL 19.5	

Accessible Water

Water medium	Visual	Touchable	Drinkable	
LAKE	X			MAJOR ATTRACTION

Amenities (Washrooms, drinking fountains, trash bins, bicycle racks, etc.) Map amenities.

	Type	Maintenance	Is it used? If not, why?
W	WASHROOMS		YES
■	TRASH BINS		YES
O	LIFE PRESERVERS		DON'T KNOW

Accessibility (on site)

Map areas inaccessible to the handicapped due to stairs and level changes
Map hard and soft surfaces
85 % hard (concrete) SIDEWALKS, PARKING LOT
15 % soft (grass)

Lighting

Map sources of lighting. What is their coverage at night?

SEE OTHER MAP

Safety - Does the site's design contribute to safety?

Map exit/entrance points.

ALL ENTRANCE POINTS ARE OPEN/UNOBSTRUCTED CREATING GREATER SENSE OF SAFETY

Is the site legible? Can the user understand the site layout quickly?

a. Looking onto the site, can you understand its layout readily?
✓ Yes. ____ No. Explain WIDE PATHS LEADING TO ATTRACTIONS IE FERRY DOCKS, BOARDWALK, NARROWER PATHS (LIMESTONE PAVERS) TO OTHER POINTS

b. Does the path network make sense? ✓ Yes. ____ No.
Explain PATH HITS ON ARE WITH ATTRACTIONS (VIEW OF DESTINATION). EXCEPT AT (A) WHERE PATH ENDS AT WALL

c. Are there focal points to orient yourself? ____ Yes. ✓ No.
Explain NO STRONG FOCAL POINT WITHIN PARK, BUT LAKEFRONT ARCHITECTS A FOCAL POINT

d. Are areas separated visually? Is this a problem? ✓ No.
____ Yes. Explain

e. Are there helpful signs on site? NOT EVIDENCED.
PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE AT BOARDWALK TRYING TO LOCATE QUAY, YEAR ROUND MAP OF WATERFRONT WITH THE VARIOUS ATTRACTIONS (TOURISTS WISHING) WOULD ENHANCE IT.

YOU'RE ATTRACTED TO THE LAKE IMMEDIATELY. GRADUAL TRANSITION AREA SIMILAR TO THE LAKE CREATED BY THE BERMS, WHICH WOULD SCREEN PARK INTO SMALLER AREAS

Identity/Focus

List features which might contribute to site identity. Features may include art, historic buildings, natural features, location, and focal points.

1 FERRY DOCKS
2 BOARDWALK / LAKE
3 HARBOUR CASTLE HILTON

Edges

Map all walls, fences, hedges, flowerbeds and abutting buildings on the site. These comprise the edges of the site.
PEDESTRIANS FROM ALL EDGES

Views to the street

Map areas where little or no view of streets and sidewalks occur.
SEE MAP

Is the site intricate? Does it possess a diversity of behavioural settings?

(a) Mix of activity: passive and active potential. Map
70 % active recreational potential SLOPED AREAS, ARTIFICIAL LIMIT ACTIVE USE
100 % passive recreational potential

(b) Mix of secluded and exposed spaces. Map
15 % secluded
85 % exposed

Trees - map massing of trees

Trees are predominantly
Large Medium (Small)

Tree cover is
Dense (Sparse)

Trees are mainly
(Deciduous) Mixed Coniferous

Erosions

Map significant erosions accompanied by explanations.
MANY PEOPLE (LOCALS, PEOPLE FAMILIAR WITH AREA) TAKE THIS SHORTCUT ROUTE TO HARBOURFRONT (SEE STAIRS)

Enclosure

Map enclosure (surrounding streetscape wall).
Note % surrounding land uses that are voids (parking lots, open space, delivery bays etc.) or buildings.
5 % voids
40 % buildings (also note % of blank walls facing site.
55 % WATER

Microclimate

Microclimate Unaffected

Microclimate (Dominated) AFFECTED BY THE LARGE COOL WINDS

Wind

Map areas protected and exposed to wind.
MOST OF THE SITE IS EXPOSED TO WIND

Sun

Map areas in sun and in shade during peak hours (12:00 - 13:00)
ENTIRE AREA IN SUN

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Level of Maintenance

Assess maintenance based on traces and general tidyness

VERY GOOD; PEOPLE DO USE TRASH BINS, ONLY TRACE OF TRASH WERE CIGARETTE BUTTS AROUND BENCHES

Presence of Management

Note presence of security staff, park staff, signs, security cameras.

MARINE FIRE DEPT STAFF SOMETIMES SIT OUTSIDE (LOCATED SOUTH OF WASHROOM BUILDING)

Special Activities

Note if the site has a special activity program (concerts, plays, art displays, courses, etc.) to attract users. Consult program calenders or public relations/programming office.

NONE

Location

Are there competing parks/plazas or other attractions nearby?

Note distance to other parks ISLAND, YORK QUAY (1 km each)

List nearby attractions QUEENS QUAY TERMINAL
FLEA MARKET (OUTDOOR ON SUNDAY)

Proximity to public transit

Map transit stops near site.

WELL SERVICED BY TRANSIT SEE MAP.

External

Does the site feel public or private?

5 % of site bordered by public buildings (government offices, parks, arts complex, community centre, schools). FIRE DEPT.

40 % of site bordered by private buildings (offices, retail establishments, residences, etc.)

20 % of site bordered by public streets and sidewalks.

25% LAKEFRONT.

Food Facilities - Map locations

Type

VENDORS
ICE CREAM PARLOUR IN HILTON

Hours of Operation

ALL DAY (SUMMER)

Noise Levels

Take 5 readings in various spots on the site with a noise meter. Plot reading positions on map with reading in decibels.

SEE MAP (MILLER)

Accessibility (off site)

Type of roads bordering site.
Determine traffic levels.

BAY & QUEEN QUAY
HIGH LEVEL OF TRAFFIC

5.2.2 ECOLOGICAL MAPPING AND OBSERVATION DIARIES

Ecological mapping and observation provided a great amount of information about the characteristics and activities of site users.

Ecological Mapping

The ecological mapping took place once every hour over several days to record a composite 12-hour day for each of the five sites. The mapping was recorded on tracing paper on top of a base map. A coding method was developed so users and their activities could be plotted.

The coding method recorded the activity, sex, age, and race of users during each hourly census. The coding symbol included an activity letter which was either capitalized (female) or lower case (male). The number of age dots identified the users' age grouping. Positioning the age dots above, below, or on either side of the gender/activity letter, determined racial origin.

Gender/Activity Letter

A	a	-	eating	N	n	- walking dog
B	b	-	walking/jogging	O	o	- watching
D	d	-	sun bathing	Q	q	- sports activity
E	e	-	reading	R	r	- standing
F	f	-	laying down/resting	S	s	- sitting
G	g	-	working	T	t	- playing
H	h	-	talking	Z	z	- other activity
M	m	-	cycling			

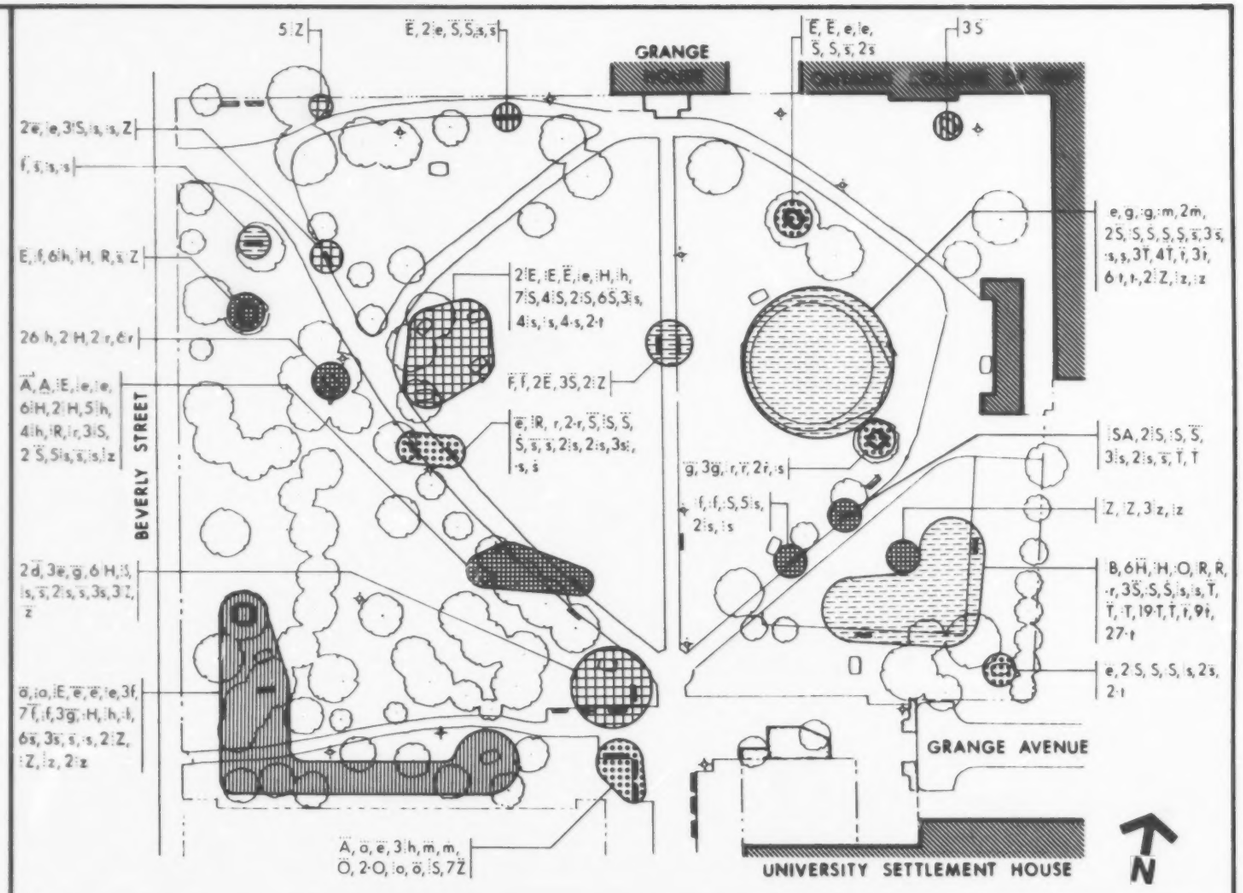
Age Dots

1.	0-12	.	(children)
2.	13-17	..	(teenagers)
3.	18-33	...	(young adults)
4.	34-50	....	(middle aged adults)
5.	50+	.....	(older adults)

Dot Placement Determines Racial Origin

	White			Examples
Asian	H	Other	A	Female, white, 34-50, eating
	Black		t	Male, white, 0-12, playing

The map is an example of how the gender/activity symbols were collected together to develop the user distribution paths and profile maps.



LEGEND: PREDOMINANT USER TYPE

- ASIAN MALES
- ASIAN FEMALES
- WHITE MALES
- WHITE FEMALES
- TEENAGERS (13 - 17 years old)
- CHILDREN (0 - 12 years old)
- MIXED USER POPULATION
- PARK BENCHES, PICNIC TABLES

GRANGE PARK

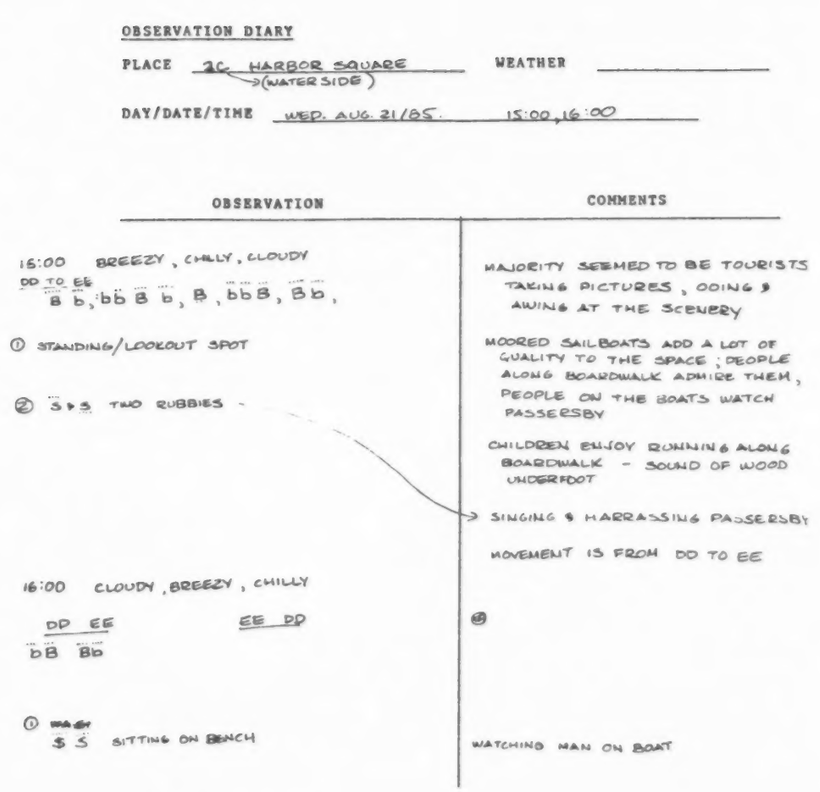
USER PROFILE

OBSERVATION DIARY

All observations were recorded on diary sheets. The actual observation was separated from the project worker's interpretation. On the project worker's clipboard, the observation sheet was on one side with the corresponding ecological map on the other. The diary accompanied the mapping as an additional source of information.

The observation diary fulfilled two tasks:

1. It supplied a qualitative information pool based on simple observations which are intended to record the interaction between users and the site, and between users themselves; and
2. It clarified specific features noted in the ecological mapping but not fully explained by the mapping itself.



OBSERVATION DIARY

PLACE 2C HARBOR SQUARE (WATER SIDE) WEATHER _____

DAY/DATE/TIME WED. AUG. 21/85. 15:00, 16:00

OBSERVATION	COMMENTS
16:00 BREEZY, CHILLY, CLOUDY DD TO EE B b, bb B b, B, bb B, B b,	MAJORITY SEEMED TO BE TOURISTS TAKING PICTURES, OOING & AWING AT THE SCENERY
① STANDING/LOOKOUT SPOT	MOORED SAILBOATS ADD A LOT OF QUALITY TO THE SPACE; PEOPLE ALONG BOARDWALK ADMIRE THEM, PEOPLE ON THE BOATS WATCH PASSERSBY
② S S TWO BUBBIES	CHILDREN ENJOY RUNNING ALONG BOARDWALK - SOUND OF WOOD UNDERFOOT
	SINGING & HARRASSING PASSERSBY
	MOVEMENT IS FROM DD TO EE
16:00 CLOUDY, BREEZY, CHILLY DD EE EE DD bB Bb	②
① MAGY S S SITTING ON BENCH	WATCHING MAN ON BOAT

5.2.3 **Questionnaire Survey of Park Users**

Forty users in the five parks were interviewed. After completing the hourly census, the project team randomly chose individuals for the interviews. The interview questions were a combination of fixed and free responses and rating scales. Primary interview topics included the user's last activity before coming to the site, the nearest intersection to this activity, means of arriving at the site, site visit frequency, amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the site, suggestions for improvement, and rating the site from 1 to 10. The age, race and sex of the interviewees were also noted.

The questionnaire data was analyzed, resulting in a great deal of statistical information. The results of this statistical work can be found throughout the report.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CITY OF TORONTO OPEN SPACE STUDY

Introduction: "Excuse me, may I have a moment of your time? The City of Toronto is doing a study of parks and plazas in downtown Toronto and we would like your opinion. This should take less than 3 minutes. Thank you ..."

1. Site (do not ask)

   1. ___ Crombie
   2. ___ Harbour Square
   3. ✓ Berczy
   4. ___ Commerce Court
   5. ___ First Canadian
   6. ___ Grange

   [3] (1)

2. Before coming to BERCZY (interviewer repeats place name), were you:

   1. ___ at home
   2. ✓ at work
   3. ___ shopping
   4. ___ sightseeing
   5. ___ at shcool
   6. ___ other

   [2] (2)

3. What was the closest street intersection to this activity?

   1. _____ and _____

   2. ACROSS FROM THE PARK (a place i.e. Eaton Centre) [2 0] (3 4 5)

   3. Undetermined

4. How did you get to this park?

   1. ✓ walked
   2. ___ transit
   3. ___ car
   4. ___ other

   [1] (6)

5. Approximately how many minutes did it take you to get here?

   1 minutes [N N 1] (7 8 9)

6. Can you tell me why you came to _____? (interviewer repeats place name)

   SUN BATHING [1 0] (10 11)

   _____ [N N] (12 13)

   [N N] (14 15)

7. In the summer how often do you come here?

1. ___ rarely
2. ___ seldom (couple of times a year)
3. ___ often (once a month)
4. ✓ frequently (once a week or more) 5x/a week

[4] 16

8. What do you do most often in this park/plaza?

SUN' [2] 17 18 [ ] 19 20

9. What, in the park/plaza, do you particularly:

Like? GREENERY

[4] 21 22 [ ] 23 24

Dislike? WEEDS IN GRASS TOO BIG

TRANSIENTS [1] 25 26 [3] 27 28

10. What would make this place more enjoyable for your use?

ACCEPTABLE AS IS [ ] 29 30 [ ] 31 32

11. In general, do you use ANY park often?

Yes ✓ [ ] 33

No _____ (go to question 14)

12. Which parks do you most often use?

MKM PARK _____ _____ [ ][ ] 34 35 [ ][ ] 36 37

13. What attracts you to use these parks?

SCENERY, FALL AND SPRING COLOURS (DRIVE THROUGH) [ ][ ] 38 39 [ ][ ] 40 41

(Go to Question 15)

14. Rank the 3 most common reasons for you not using parks? (Circle as many as apply)

_____ You are too busy. [ ] 42

_____ There is nothing to do there.

_____ Other attractions are more interesting. [ ] 43

_____ Unsafe.

_____ Too crowded.

_____ Don't like parks. [ ] 44

_____ Have access to other recreational facilities.

_____ Parks are inconveniently located.

_____ Other _____

15. On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate this place?
(1 - low, 10 - high)

8 (write number)

_____ (don't know, no response) [ ] 45 46

16. The City of Toronto is organizing some meetings to get the public's opinion on parks. Would you be interested in attending one of these meetings?

_____ No (If no) ("O.K., thank you for this interview.")

✓ Yes (If yes) ("May I have your name and telephone number where you can be reached?") [1] 47

_____

_____ Private name and telephone no.

_____

0 - 12, 13 - 17, (18 - 33,) 34 - 50, 50+ [3] 48

M (F) [1] 49

B (W) A O [1] 50

Date AUG 22/85 [ ][ ][2][2][ ][5] 51 52 53 54 55 56

Weather Conditions SUNNY, COMFORTABLE [9] 57 58

Time of Interview (24 hour clock) 1335 [1][3][:][3][5] 59 60 61 62 63

I.D. SHWJ. [ ][ ][ ][ ] 64 65 66 67